M A R T I N L U T H E R

The Development of His Hermeneutical thinking

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June 2026
Revised and Expanded

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A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of the Far Eastern Bible College

in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of

BACHELOR OF THEOLOGY

FAR EASTERN BIBLE COLLEGE

S I N G A P O R E

APRIL, 1992

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1992

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P R E F A C E

This paper started off as an investigation, in the face of various claims on Luther in the current debates, into the development of Luther's hermeneutical thinking, i.e. the way and method of how he was able to study the Holy Scriptures and obtained the greatest benefit and developed a norm of piety not only for himself and also for the whole of Christianity since St. Paul's day. God has a wonderful plan of salvation for humankind: but no one knows it better that St. Paul; and no one understands St. Paul better than Luther. Investigation into Luther cannot but to take an biographical approach in that every aspect of Luther's thinking: theological, social, political, hermeneutical, etc., could not be independently disassociated from the long years of his personal struggle (Anfechtung) for a gracious God.

Investigation of him cannot, therefore, be compartmentalized without doing injustice to Luther. This perhaps is the most difficult area anyone would face while doing Luther. This paper took a free discussion of some aspects of Luther's life and was able to identify some broad elements and major themes in Luther's thinking: theological or otherwise and to observe how he manipulates these concepts in his exegetical endeavour to extract the fundamental message of

piety for the believer. Luther's major concern was for one who has already believed in Jesus: i.e. justification by faith is for the converted, the just and the saved, for the just shall live by faith.

Anyone who has had engaged in the study of Luther soon realized what an awesome and tedious task that one would get frustrated easily by the amount of volumes of his writings. Indeed one cannot be completely satisfied with one's study and research of Luther because Luther is such a theological giant that reading him involves patience and much efforts; however, as so many have experienced it, the reward is exceedingly great for personal benefit and spiritual enlightenment. One cannot remain long without being changed in the process.

We must bear in mind Luther did not begin his exegetical exercises with a preconceived notion with a set of ideal rulings to which his interpretation of the Holy Scriptures was to conform, rather he literally walked into something he did not expect nor well prepare for. Unlike other reformers before or during his time who were influenced either by Neo-Platonism via St. Augustine, or Aristotelian philosophical ideal via humanism of the Renaissance, or Mysticism via the Spiritualists, Luther emerged straight out fresh from the Holy Scriptures as an appeal from his existentialistic crisis. In this way Luther's hermeneutics was without influence of philosophical nor spiritual idealism, but practical and pragmatic which involved a strong element of risk in that he did not foresee the outcome of his exegesis nor the impact subsequently it might have. His hermeneutics was an open-end effort completely led by the Holy Spirit, for no one knows better how the Scriptures should be understood or interpreted other than the author Himself, the Almighty God.

It still remains true that the main question is not that we do not have a Luther, rather how to describe him fairly and justly as noted by Lohse later on in this study. The question is no longer whether Luther and his Reformation is still relevant to us or how do we pose question as to the significance of the Reformation is our days, rather do we hear him correctly and honestly? Have we listened to

his advice? The question of contemporary significance of Luther and the Reformation must take into consideration of describing Luther fairly and honestly before attempt is made to answer more other questions however urgent it may appeared to be. We must not allow ourselves to fall into the trap of having a distorted Luther or the Gospel he rediscovered whereby we are impotent to response to the changing world, but to sit back and lament and say, "This is all the best we have done; submit the rest to God." while we are so oblivious about our deception of self complacency. Each generation of believers must personally or corporately involve in a kind of Anfechtung not unlike of that of Luther in order to appropriate the Gospel which is given in Jesus the Christ.

May the righteousness of God which is in Christ Jesus continue to shine forth to the believers of this generation as He has done during Luther's Reformation. Amen.

ACKNOWLEDEGMENTS

I wish to extend my gratitude and deep appreciation to the Rev. Timothy Tow, Principal of the Far Eastern Bible College who four years ago instrumentally ushered me into the FEBC, and also being the Supervisor of this paper, has been kind enough to read through the final manuscript. Gratitude must be also extended to the Session of the Life Bible Presbyterian Church, Singapore, has been very kind to me during my study in FEBC.

Ricky Ho, my fellow roommate and best friend in FEBC with whom we have had many hours of profitable conversation in theology and shared deep concern for the Gospel of Christ Jesus, read portion of the manuscript in the early stage of preparation with encouraging comment.

Last, not the least, to Maria, my wife, my little Katie, whose patience and kindness while I spent the best hour of the term holidays more than the assigned hours glued to the computer, the warm homelife, the hot soups, she made for me. She also took time to read the many drafts and to proof read some portion of the manuscript. To borrow from Dr. Luther, "I would not trade her for Venice and all the Kingdom of France, because God has given her to me and me to her." And it is to her this paper is dedicated.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

WITHIN CHRISTIAN CULTURAL SPHERES OUTSIDE WESTERN AND Northern Europe—most notably across Anglophone communities and ecclesiastic institutions chiefly in former British colonial domains—Calvinist theology remains the most pervasive intellectual tradition. This ubiquity, however, frequently engenders a certain sectarian triumphalism among the faithful, inducing the erroneous belief that the Reformed tradition finds its singular, most splendid, or most rigorously systematised expression exclusively within Calvinism.

John Calvin (1509–1564) was profoundly influenced by the theological thought of his pioneering predecessor, Martin Luther (1483–1546); indeed, Luther's ethical maxims, alongside his political and economic perspectives, find distinct echoes and cast an undeniable shadow across Calvin's *magnum opus, the Institutes of the Christian Religio*n. The psychological tendency within certain church circles to marginalise Luther may be attributed not merely to shifts gliding along the political divide, but also to a pervasive assumption that Luther's theology lacks systematic cohesion. Yet, there is no necessity to view Luther and Calvin through an adversarial lens. Historical reality presents a far more nuanced paradigm, compelling us to approach Luther's theological system with utmost impartiality and candour, to discern how his methodology contributed to the Reformation, and to appreciate how Calvin—alongside other influential theologians of the Reformed traditions—drew direct sustenance from Luther's intellectual legacy.

After all, the theological content and core insights of Luther and Calvin exhibit remarkable congruence, extending even to similarities in their theological syntax and terminology, notwithstanding occasional instances where identical terms carry disparate definitions. The primary divergence between the two lies rather in their method of presentation and structural organisation; unfortunately, when intersecting with political contingencies, the dissemination of the Gospel and theological thought became delineated along linguistic and geopolitical boundaries.

To begin, one must understand the distinction between systematic theology and a system of theology. At present, the theological systems with which we interact in our shared life of faith and doctrinal standards are essentially twofold.

One such framework is schematic systematic theology. Profoundly influenced by the humanistic thought of the French encyclopaedists, its primary function is to delineate the entirety of Christ's salvation as a comprehensive plan, presented through structural charts and synoptic overviews. Often tracing the architecture of the Apostles' Creed and expanding upon its content, this approach seeks to integrate the Christian faith in its entirety into a flawless, consummate system. To this day, its quintessential expression is found in Covenantal Theology—alternatively designated as Federal Theology[1]—alongside another notable paradigm, Dispensational Theology. By and large, these frameworks were embraced as fundamental theology by the Puritans and their ideological successors, including Fundamentalists, Neo-Fundamentalists, and independent evangelical and neo-evangelical groups. Disseminated across various regions via Puritan global missions and missionary societies, its pre-eminent theologians were predominantly mission-focused thinkers operating across the United Kingdom and the United States, writing largely in English, and establishing historical ties to Calvinism through the Westminster Confession of Faith and its kindred standards. Reformed theology itself is largely dominated by Covenantal Theology, though

this particular school delineates God's covenant strictly into two forms: the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, distinguishing itself through its emphatic focus on the grand, overarching blueprint of salvation. While this comprehensive, schematic format is also present among Dutch and German theologians, within Chinese theological literature, Jia Yuming stands as the pre-eminent representative of this synoptic, chart-based methodology. Furthermore, American-born Fundamentalism also claims Covenantal Theology as its theological bedrock, though it diverges into two major factions that divide God's covenants into either seven or twenty-four distinct classifications. Covenantal Theology in the United States is presently experiencing a wave of revisionism, giving rise to New Covenant Theology, an emergent movement upon which it is perhaps premature to offer a definitive critique.

The merit of this schematic system of theology lies principally in its superficial appearance of rigorous systemisation, neatness, and ease of comprehension and application, seemingly offering a comprehensive systematisation of the Christian faith in a single stroke. Yet, its defining virtue is simultaneously its most profound vulnerability. The formulation of a flawless, unblemished theological system remains an earthly impossibility. Indeed, since the sixteenth century, Covenantal Theology has spent three to four centuries embroiled in internal debates to forge such a perfect framework, contending over the precise doctrines it should accommodate—such as the validity of the Covenant of Redemption. One must ultimately enquire: even if we were capable of constructing a flawless blueprint of salvation, what role would remain for God when confronted with such a perfectly self-contained paradigm of redemption? God does not run the world according to theology.

It is imperative to note that the ultimate objective of theological discipline is not the weaving of an abstract, arcane scheme of universal salvation to satisfy metaphysical ideals—no matter how pure the underlying motivation, how magnificent the blueprint, or how noble the ambition. The construction of castles

in the air within an ivory tower forms no part of the proper function of theology. We must not systematise theology merely to indulge a theological idealism that demands an ideal system. This point alone suffices to demonstrate why, throughout history, systems of theology predicated upon philosophical rationality have invariably succumbed to collapse. Grounded in the foundational premise of divine revelation, theology inherently resists any such rigid schema. Despite centuries of diligent endeavor, philosophical metaphysics and secular rationality have struggled to secure a completely legitimate standing within theological discourse, frequently encountering resilient opposition.

Within the annals of theological history, the earliest Christian thinker to resist philosophical rationality was arguably the second-century theologian, Tertullian. He steadfastly maintained that philosophy within the theological sphere was superfluous,[2] positing that divine revelation alone was all-sufficient. Although Tertullian's perspective originally emerged in response to the allegorical exegesis of Clement and the Alexandrian school, as well as the prevailing heresies of his era, his underlying motive was to safeguard the purity of the Gospel from external intellectual contamination[3]—particularly given how deeply Greek philosophy had influenced Jewish intellectuals during the nascent stages of Christianity. Philosophy is by no means the sole rational foundation to which theology must conform; the intellectual basis of theology is neither built upon nor derived from philosophy. Rather, theology possesses its own intrinsic rational framework, the ontological essence of which is distinct from philosophical reason. Like Clement and Origen, Tertullian was a North African theologian, albeit of a different school; whereas Clement belonged to the Alexandrian tradition, Tertullian hailed from Carthage.4 Whether geopolitical factors contributed to the divergence in their theological thought remains a matter of conjecture. Nevertheless, Tertullian's insistence on a total reliance upon scriptural and uniquely Christian resources would subsequently serve as an intellectual catalyst for Martin Luther's pioneering methodology of Scripture interpreting Scripture.

Subsequent exegetical endeavours that leaned upon philosophical categories have seldom yielded their intended benefits. Even in the twentieth century, attempts to borrow from disciplines outside philosophy failed to bring about a meaningful turning point. If truth is measured by that which endures the test of time, the theological history of the past two to three centuries provides ample evidence that theology has frequently found itself on the precipice of bankruptcy. Concurrently, over the past decade or more, we have witnessed a cohort of scholars who have encountered Christianity through secular education—principally within the fields of comparative religion and sociology. Whilst expressing a profound sympathy toward Christian historical achievements and its contemporary milieu, these scholars have neither personally embraced faith in Christ Jesus nor received baptism, yet they frequently write and theorise upon Christianity under the self-designated mantle of 'Cultural Christians'. Some among them are engaged in translating Christian literature into Chinese; others hold academic chairs at universities or assume roles within ecclesiastical institutions and organizations. Such approaches appear to proceed from a view that marginalises the Church as merely one social entity among others, seeking to dismantle any perceived sense of exceptionalism or monopolistic pre-eminence within Christianity, whilst desiring to partake in the transformative benefits of Christ Jesus. For the most part, these scholars comprise sympathetic Christian atheists. They presume that by grasping the internal mechanisms of how Christian believers successfully transform external laws into internal autonomy—willingly submitting to such self-regulation for moral betterment—they might convert this inner purification and self-discipline into educational maxims. Through this, they hope to elevate human character and enrich the spirit, thereby redressing contemporary moral decline without the necessity of baptism or formal adherence to the faith. Yet, curiously, they simultaneously disparage the very faith capable of changing human hearts, viewing it as a form of spiritual bondage. This current dynamic within theological circles and church life is indeed profoundly intriguing.

Theological thought must ultimately descend to the streets and live alongside the broader populace: suffering together, striving together, and engaging in the struggles of the soul. If theology cannot offer a direct contribution to the realities of human existence, but instead devolves into an accumulation of abstract, inscrutable, and self-contradictory notions—serving merely as a decorative apotropaic veneer for its practitioners, then its condition becomes far more miserable than that of one who remains entirely oblivious to it; indeed, theology becomes more futile than any other discipline. The requirements of theology as an academic subject of study and the demands of God Himself upon humanity are entirely distinct matters; the former does not represent the latter. Theology does not exist for its own sake. Its vital function must be to guide believers as they follow Christ in the realities of this world, bearing witness to Him and to human faith in Him, whilst allowing Christ to acknowledge us as His disciples, and enabling us to discern the contemporary movements of the Divine. To ascertain the current stage of God's unfolding purpose on His journey toward establishing the Kingdom wherein Christ reigns supreme remains the paramount concern of theology.

REVELATION and CHRISTOLOGY

The witness and revelation of the Holy Spirit have ever been the prime instigators of the theological enterprise. Indeed, one might go so far as to say that theology itself is among the divine charismata; yet, even if one demurs from designating theology as a direct gift from God, that the Holy Spirit maintains a distinctive, definitive role within the theological endeavour remains a matter of absolute certainty. The primary office of the Holy Spirit is to bear witness that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the risen Lord, who shall come again to judge the quick and the dead. These verities constitute the very core of theology, serving as the substance of confession for Christian believers both individually and corporately. Left to its own devices, the human will possesses no capacity to

confess sin, nor can it truly perceive its own fallen state; it remains utterly incapable of embracing Christ's redemption, let alone rendering praise to the Almighty. It is only when the Holy Spirit bears witness to Christ that faith, conviction of sin, and repentance are generated within the human heart.[5] Concurrently, the Spirit bears witness to the fidelity or infidelity of the believer, and to the reality of their salvation. In this sense, a confession of faith is invariably the fruit of the Spirit's operation. By extension, our reliance upon the Holy Spirit when exploring theology does not imply that theology supplants confessions or creeds, nor does theology arrogate to itself a status co-equal to them. Because the Spirit discerns how believers truly believe in Christ—or where they falter from right belief—confession is never a matter of whim or private interpretation. As God externally proclaims the salvific work of Jesus Christ through the Holy Word of the Gospel to apprehend our hearts, the Holy Spirit simultaneously works through that same Word internally, illuminating our minds to receive both salvation and spiritual gifts.[6] Apart from the operation of the Holy Spirit, humanity in its so-called natural state would sooner perish than confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God or willingly acknowledge its own guilt, much less cry out to God as 'Abba, Father'. Devoid of the Spirit's nurturing grace, human beings can neither naturally emulate the love of Jesus Christ toward the world, nor give expression to divine charity, forbearance, and societal moral obligations. Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is the initiator of theology, the theological discipline must inherently be illative and illuminating, serving to nurture our understanding and to render us receptive to the Spirit's witness and instruction.

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit constitutes the very rational foundation of theology. Within the theological enterprise, the Spirit illuminates the mind to receive the Gospel of Christ, to comprehend the Holy Word—namely, the Scriptures—and to equip theology in aiding the verbal expression of the Gospel in missionary work. Absent the presence of the Holy Spirit, mission, exegesis, confession, and theological inquiry degenerate into hollow, academic exercises in

arcane self-justification; without the Spirit, mission is reduced to a mere trumpet-blast for these hollow abstractions. That an individual comes to believe in Jesus Christ stands as definitive proof of the Spirit's successful inward operation. This achievement is a testament to God's own sovereignty to liberate and transform the human heart from the shackles of its sinful nature. It is the triune God Himself deploying His goodness to fashion a new creation out of broken humanity.

Divine revelation serves as the rational bedrock of theology. Crucially, this revelation remains singular: it is found exclusively in the historical manifestation of Jesus Christ—that is, the events that have unfolded, and are yet to unfold, surrounding His person: His nativity, public ministry, passion, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, alongside the equally paramount promise of His second coming. Jesus Christ remains the locus of these articles of faith.[7] The rationality illuminated by the Holy Spirit bears witness to none other than Jesus Christ. Christ is a living Person, not an abstract logic. Whilst philosophical rationality is predicated upon abstract logic, Jesus Christ, as a Person of the triune Godhead, stands over against such philosophical reasoning. The personhood of the Lord Jesus Christ can never be conflated with, or subordinated to, the strictures of philosophical logic.

To return to our earlier thread: the alternative framework within Christian thought is thematic systematic theology. The hallmark of this particular approach lies in its structural cohesion around pivotal theological themes. Rather than enforcing a rigid chart, it elucidates the organic interplay between each component, demonstrating how these theological concepts cultivate the life of faith, before extending these thematic insights outward to encompass other spheres of human existence, such as economics, politics, or vocation. The theological system of Martin Luther stands as the pre-eminent exemplar of this thematic paradigm.

Martin Luther's monumental contribution to theology resides principally in his exegetical breakthrough. This breakthrough subsequently provided him with an unassailable theological stance, serving as the intellectual bulwark for the Reformation during his disputations with the Roman Curia. The exact mechanics

of Luther's pioneering hermeneutical steps, alongside the historical circumstances that catalyzed his discoveries, have been extensively documented in numerous masterworks and require no detailed elucidation here. Nevertheless, Luther's strategy of reading the entirety of both the Old and New Testaments through a Christocentric lens—ultimately affirming Christ as the very righteousness of salvation bestowed by God upon humanity—becomes far more luminous when approached through a thematic system. Luther's systematic theology utilizes core themes as its structural framework, comprising a constellation of mutually interactive and conversational theological concepts: the absolute sovereignty of God as God, the suffering Christ and the theologia crucis (theology of the cross), the dialectic of Law and Gospel, and the unconditioned authority of Scripture as the sole rule of faith and practice. These concepts would subsequently exert a profound and enduring influence upon the wider Reformation movement.

Beyond matters of structure and theme, Luther's theology stands apart from other strands of sixteenth-century Reformed theology—which often approached the discipline via French humanism—by achieving a decisive and clean severance from the strictures of Greek metaphysics. Indeed, Luther's historical disputations with the humanists were invariably tethered to his rejection of the role of metaphysics within the theological domain. As early as his lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Luther had discarded any notion that Greek philosophy possessed a valid place in theology, explicitly denying the utility of metaphysics in theological inquiry. He steadfastly maintained that metaphysics must be granted no standing in exegetical and theological enterprises. In this particular regard, the humanistically inflected Reformed tradition arguably faltered in comparison to Luther's system; Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, for instance, remains noticeably permeated by the spirit of Greek philosophy. Yet, there is no necessity to instigate an artificial rivalry between Luther and Calvin to determine who achieves greater eminence. Their respective

contributions and enduring legacies within the annals of theological history have long been securely established.

Nonetheless, the theological discipline cannot afford to lose itself in a mere romanticism of past achievements. The trajectory of its future must remain firmly anchored in, and derived from, historical reality. If we are to explore the future path of the Gospel and offer a more honest and faithful presentation of Jesus Christ, it is essential to look back at history. We must investigate the root causes behind why the efficacy of the Gospel—both in its public proclamation and its transformative impact on daily life—presently borders on a state of near-total collapse, whether in Western Europe or across East Asia.

In subsequent eras, the evolution of German theological thought similarly favoured thematic frameworks as its systematic model, expanding its horizons from philosophical theology into the specialized disciplines of biblical theology and the history of Israelite religion.

CHAPTER TWO

Why Hermeneutics

PROTESTANTISM EXPLODED OUT OF THE EXEGETICAL EFFORT OF Martin Luther in his rediscovery of the meaning of the righteousness of God. It grew out of his persistent search for a gracious God. Moises Silva described the sixteenth-century Reformation as a hermeneutical revolution.[1] At the bottom of many important issues a pertinent point of contention was the authority of interpretation of the Holy Scriptures and or which one was legitimate. Luther in no ambiguous term denied the Pope's supreme authority and monopoly over the Scriptures or of its interpretation, and proceeded to make his own hermeneutical concerns a key element in the religious conflict that followed.2

Many, however, lamented that hermeneutics has today became an obnoxious jargon not only for the theology in ivory tower as well as life in faith. This need not be so. We have for sure lost the immediate impact that Luther has had done in the sixteenth century nor do we need to fall back in revival nostalgia. Should historical Christianity lose in hermeneutics, its solution properly understood in also to be found in it.

Historical criticism together with the rise of liberalism has dominated the field of Bible study for two hundred over years. In the last hundred years or so, exegesis has had many great achievements, but it has brought forth great errors as well.3 To criticize them at all would be taken by many as tantamount to sacrilege, especially if it were to be done by a nonexegete. Only a generation ago, as Moises Silva has observed, conservative Christians enjoyed a sense of unity in their interpretation of the Scriptures despite the fact that differences existed among

various denominations and that some of these differences touched on matters of considerable importance in doctrine and life such as the meaning and practice of baptism, the proper understanding of sanctification and so on. Few, however, seemed to appreciate that Evangelicals were faced with a hermeneutical crisis.4

In the older view, hermeneutics was concerned with the formulation of "rules" to ensure that a particular understanding of a text was an accurate one. For instance, all consideration of the principles of how to interpret various figures of speech and the like. The Greek students and the language teacher once lived in a stable, protected world where the rules were known, where there were established methods, and where traditional grammars made up the bulk of teaching materials as if it were something known and absolute. Students and teachers were alike forbidden to leave this ivory tower and, often interpretation to the Scriptures turned out to be mere opinion that grew out of idiosyncrasy of personal piety. It was thought and so was taught that every word in the Greek text has a meaning bound up with its shape or its components. In this view (word study), as D. A. Carson has observed, meaning is determined by etymology: that is, by the root or roots of a word. He insisted that the meaning of a word cannot be reliably determined by etymology, or that a root, once discovered, always projects a certain semantic load onto any word that incorporates that root. He further said that we cannot responsibly assume that etymology is related to meaning.5 J. P. Louw thought that in order to provide a semantic structure it must be free from the domination of grammatical categories.6

Note must be taken that the term hermeneutics meant different thing to different people. In its traditional usage, or in classical hermeneutics, namely, the study of those principles that should guide our work of interpretation. In this way, as understood by Anthony C. Thiselton, hermeneutics entailed the formulation of rules for the understanding of an ancient text, especially in linguistic and historical terms. The interpreter was urged to begin with the language of the text, including its grammar, vocabulary, and style. He examined its linguistic, literary,

and historical context, hence the term historico-grammatical. In other words, traditional hermeneutics begins with the recognition that a text was conditioned by a given historical context.7

It was held in classical hermeneutics that the understanding of an ancient text could be achieved by the observance of hermeneutical rules. The underling question of understanding, however, was a question of epistemology after Kantian philosophy. Schleiermacher took the problem of hermeneutics to a turning-point in that understanding was made possible in hermeneutics. Until then, hermeneutics was thought to "support, secure, and clarify" an already accepted understanding.8 The question of epistemology is an unresolved philosophical enigma. The importance of Schleiermacher in the history of hermeneutics was that he questioned how any understanding was possible. Such understanding, for Schleiermacher, as understood by Walter Dunnett, begins at the identification of the interpreter with the author or the source of the text by way of historical and linguistic knowledge.9 Thiselton, however, perceived that interpretation goes beyond the mere accumulation of linguistic and historical data, and the application of scientific rules of interpretation. This is a real problem. In the words of Thiselton, "A man might possess all the linguistic and historical knowledge required in order to interpret a text, but still not be able to understand the text in question."10 In his evening years, Schleiermacher attempted a psychological understanding of the individual being in each individual case.11 It is suspected here that, then, the fundamental problem of hermeneutics lies in its close relation with epistemology, an association too close for comfort. It might even be that the relation, if there is any, was ill conceived at its best. Could there not be an understanding of an ancient text without epistemology of a philosophical kind?

The problem of metaphysics in hermeneutics was not at all new. As Moises Silva has cautioned that no aspect of the current hermeneutical crisis developed spontaneously.12 History of hermeneutics is indeed a discipline of its own right. As early as the Middle Ages, exegesis was separate from theology,

while theology had largely joined to philosophy, and the philosophical framework moved from a Platonic to an Aristolelian metaphysics. Augustine himself was, before his conversion, a philosopher of Neo-platonism. It was presumed that the will of God was hidden in the Scriptures and had to be discovered. Toward the end of this period, the influence of Aristotle's philosophy became stronger, and a greater rationalism was in keeping with a more literal exegesis.[13] Patrick Henry also concluded that Platonism played a major in the Hermeneutics in the Middle Ages.14 He further observed that the function of interpreting the Scriptures was done by monks and bishops who in those days were more of teaching and pastoral in nature than administrative as in modern days, thus rendered them a direct contact with the common believers.15 Their immediate concern was to communicate the Scripture to the common folks in a kind of language that was familiar to the peasants and merchants and therefore they were not dealing with the philosophical questions in hermeneutics though they were not completely unaware of them. Philosophical theology and theological philosophy controlled the thinkers and, as Mickelsen puts it, "Throughout the Middle Ages interpretation is bound by a dull conformity. Church tradition stands supreme."16

In its basic motive, the New Hermeneutics was an attempt to find a modern metaphysics for the gospel.17 Many tried to deny it, nonetheless, New Hermeneutic has redefined the field of hermeneutics. A definition given by Thiselton explained that hermeneutics in the more recent sense of the term begins with the recognition that historical conditioning is two-sided: the modern interpreter, no less than the text, stands in a given historical context and tradition.18 The basic concern of the New Hermeneutics, as Ernst Fuchs puts it, is with how the text, seen as a merely historical source, can again become the text of preaching--without our denying that the text is also a historical source.19 The New Hermeneutics perceived that the problem of "distance" in interpretation as "in part the result of historical development from the Scripture "as the text of preaching

carried out in the body of Christ' to Scripture "as the text of research, the historical "source" for the reconstruction of period portraits of the past, in which Christology was relativized."20 Thiselton, being one of the leading analysts and sensitive critics of the New Hermeneutics, further added that the change in meaning of hermeneutics is fundamental.21

Together with the change in meaning, the New Hermeneutics comes with a set of different function for hermeneutics. It is to serve understanding. Drawing from Gadamer and other, Thiselton said that for understanding to take place, two sets of variables must be brought into relation with each other.22 The task of hermeneutics, in this effort, is to bring into a "fusion of horizons" the historical particularities and historical conditionalities of the text and those of the modern reader or hearer. In this "fusion of horizons" the interpreter must be able to relate his own horizons to those of the text. Thiselton further proposed that Gadamer's image of a fusion of horizons provides one possible way of describing the main problem and task of hermeneutics.23 Drawing conclusion from Richard Palmer, Thiselton added that explanatory interpretation must be made within a horizon of already granted meanings and intentions. That area of assumed understanding, in the word of Palmer, is called pre-understanding.24

Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling were students of Bultmann together at Tubingen after World War II. They both changed the hermeneutical dialectic from myth versus understanding of existence to language versus language-event25 and there after hermeneutics assumed the name New Hermeneutics. The New Hermeneutics takes one special interest on the matter of the nature and function of language in hermeneutics. Their interest in language is not the morphological aspect of language which in its ordinary spoken or written form rather, for the New Hermeneutics, language is primarily a sign or a letting see, a meaning in the active sense. As understood by Thiselton, for Fuchs and Ebeling hermeneutics is not a matter of understanding individual words, but of understanding the word.26 In addition, for Ebeling, hermeneutics is not merely a mechanical matter of

applying certain hermeneutical "rules"27 Giving it a proper description, Thiselton put it that the central concern of hermeneutics is: how do I come to understand in practice28 or what does the text mean for me.29

The New Hermeneutics, even Bultmann himself, have been especially vocal in claiming Luther as their spiritual father.30 Thiselton has in his The Two Horizons dealt with the question of the source and influence of Lutheranism on Bultmann's hermeneutics. Drawing from R. A. Johnson, he said what was found in Bultmann was a peculiar fusion of Neo-Kantian epistemology and Lutheranism of the nineteenth century. Citing Johnson, Thiselton warned that we must not confuse the Lutheranism of the nineteenth century with Luther's own thought.31 The fact was Bultmann's Luther was always mediated to him through the specific traditions of nineteenth-century Lutheranism.32

Montgomery had, as early as the nineteen-sixties, challenged the claim of Ebeling on Luther. He concluded that anyone who is familiar with Luther's exegetical writing would not commit him to a dialectic, experiential hermeneutic as the New Hermeneutics would do.33 He asserts that the main issue was not whether Luther's Anfechtungen had any role in his exegesis, rather did he consider his experiences to conjoin with the scriptural text in a dialectic hermeneutics.34 The claim of New Hermeneutics on Luther has unwittingly reopen afresh the interest on Luther study in general, and his hermeneutics in particular. Ebeling himself was a Luther scholar with considerable strength and had written on Luther's hermeneutic.

Thiselton has well observed that the questions about hermeneutics and language have had gone through three phases in the course of history:35 first, the Antioch school, such as Theodore of Mopsuestia and John Chrysostom; then came the

Reformation, and the eighteenth century. On Luther and language, Thiselton asserts Luther goes out of his way to stress that the study of language as such

makes a positive contribution to biblical hermeneutics.36 He further observed that Luther's interest in language studies was not motivated
simply by a hostility towards allegory, as Ebeling and Moeller thus stressed, rather Luther was concerned about the relation of the language of the text to his own world.37 It could be said that Luther took a pragmatic approach toward the use of language in the Scriptures. Luther refused to consider the interpretation of the Bible as a purely technical matter, as well observed by Gerrish.38

By way of discussion of the definition of hermeneutics we have briefly observed that hermeneutic discussion has shifted its center of gravity from the concern of formulation of rules and the proper application of these rules in the interpretation of Scripture to the concern of the problem of the pastness of history of the text and its meaning for the present, the role and nature of language in the place of hermeneutics, the question of epistemological understanding in the category of pre-understanding, the fusion of horizons as a point of contact between the text and the interpreter, and the question of continuity in the historical Christianity as expressed in the Protestantism since the day of Reformation. These topics properly would continue to dominate the scene of hermeneutic discussion for a long time to come.

CHAPTER THREE

Why Luther

LUTHER RESEARCH HAS GONE THROUGH MANY PHASES OF development. Each of the various epoches of Luther's interpretation, no doubt, has focused our attention on different aspects of his person and work. Evaluation of his life and work ranged from those who saw in him "the evil genius of Germany" to those who would make of him a "plaster saint." Other called him a seven-headed devil. At least, one of his closest colleagues insisted that he was a prophet--perhaps even Elijah--sent by God himself. It is indeed true that Luther was a reformer and prophet of the German people, however, he was primarily a theologian and an interpreter of the Holy Scriptures. Borrowing from B. A. Gerrish, Luther has to be appraised as a figure in the history of hermeneutics.[1] It must be recognized that the renewal he initiated, without parallel in history, was in the first instance theological rather than either ecclesiastical or political concern. It rose from his own encounter with God in the Scriptures. Subsequently it was because he experienced divine grace in Christ in his personal life through the medium of the written Word that the Scriptures was to be central in the Reformation.

If we are to reach a right judgment on the various issues in theology and hermeneutics, exegesis and interpretation, questions of faith and life which now confront us, we cannot afford to ignore the contribution of the pioneer reformer. Luther represents something more than merely an echo of the past because his supreme concern was to transmit the Word of God, and to expound the norm to which Christian piety must conform. He is still, therefore, a living and relevant voice.

In the matter of Luther research we may not be aware of the interesting fact that more books have been written about Martin Luther than about any other

single person who has ever lived except Jesus of Nazareth.2 Each year over a thousand books and learned articles appear in print about Luther in some dozens languages. The Weimar Edition of Luther's works, over 100 volumes at present and still growing, must nearly overwhelm the beginning student.3

Luther's lasting memorial may in fact be the so called Luther Renaissance of the twentieth century that has crammed books about him into research libraries all over the world. Paul Tillich for reason of his own has placed the Luther Renaissance as a movement which happened within the Ritschlian school and thought that Ritschl had successfully rediscovered Luther.4 Albrecht Ritschl (1822-89) was thought to have contributed to the development of an important image of Luther by way of his effort to reinterpret the Reformation understanding of the Gospel in opposition to the different versions made current by Romanism and Mysticism, Pietism and Romanticism,5 both in his systematic presentation of doctrine in 1870 his best-known, the great monograph on The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation, and in his historical study of Pietism.6 Ritschl's image of Luther must be, as suggested by Mackintosh, understood from that Ritschl took to the starting point of theology not from the 'Christian consciousness', but from the 'Gospel' given in Jesus Christ. For Ritschl, theology is summoned to set forth the revealed truth, and in that sense theology has a definitely authoritative character: what man is to believe concerning God, what duty God requires of man.7 Mackintosh further said that Ritschl found that Luther's greatest achievement was his overcoming of the influence of speculative metaphysics as well as of mysticism. This conclusion, Mackintosh noted, grew out of Ritschl's resentment at the intrusion of metaphysical principles and modes of inference into the area of meaning which faith asserts, or ought to assert.8 In the words of Lohse, Ritschl regarded Pietism as a false revival movement that was derived more from mysticism and Catholic ideals of the Christian life than the Protestant tradition.9 Ritschl also expressed his opposition to the various form of the nineteenth-century Awakening movement.10

Ritschl's image of Luther, however, suffered from serious weakness. As cited by Lohse, Theodosius Harnack complained that Ritschl took concepts that were really theological concepts for Luther and redefined them in terms of inner freedom and of ethics and he had abridged or completely overlooked basic elements of Luther's theology.11

Lohse comments that the result of Ritschl's interpretation of Luther, nonetheless, was that theologians began to become aware of the significance of Luther's theology. Till then, he said, "Luther was a church father whose writings were reverently quoted but hardly ever read."12

Luther research in the true sense of the term did not come about until the beginning of the twentieth century with the significant breakthrough made by Karl Holl (1866-1926). Modern Lutheran research owes Holl a debt of gratitude for his basic contribution. Karl Holl had been professor of church history at the University of Berlin since 1906. Like his older colleague Aldof von Harnack, Karl Holl was better known for his work on the Greek church fathers than on Reformation Protestantism. Holl's approach to Christian history was nearly the opposite of that of Harnack in that Holl began with the personal or "inner" development of the key personalities and tried to show their significance in terms of their relationship to leading idea or concept of God. Years later in Helsinki in 1963 Lutherans were divided behind these two great figures. Not all Lutherans would accept Holl's reading of Luther. They rallied around Harnack's work on Luther's theology, Luthers Theologie mit Besonderer Beziehung auf seine Versohnungs-und Erlosungslehre, which was written in 1862, but was reissued in 1927. Carl E. Braaten reported that Karl Holl was influenced by Ritschl's theology.13

Whereas for Harnack the forensic notion of imputed righteousness as well as the reality of God's wrath was decisive in Luther's theology which was dismissed by Ritschl as "an out modeded primitive picture of a bloodthirsty deity who demanded sacrifices to appease his honor."14

When Holl died in 1926 at the age of sixty, he had become one of the best-known Luther-scholars of all time.15 Bense reported that Harnack at Holl's funeral made the remark that Holl's Luther studies "will remain as long as there is a theological discipline and an evangelical faith, and their author will retain the glory of having become a renewer of Lutheranism."16

Another formidable factor contributed to the growth of Luther research, along side with Holl, in twentieth century was the publication of Weimar Edition of Luther's work. This is the largest and usually the best edition of Luther's work which consists of four parts: Writings, Letters, Table Talk, and the German Bible. It is the best collection thus far. Only the first part containing the "writing" is not yet finished.17

Unlike the Erlangen Edition that appeared in 1826 in its incomplete form and the most easily available though, The Weimar Edition did not separate Luther's German from his Latin writings but rather tried to group Luther's publication and manuscripts in chronological order as was designed in the original plan.18 After the first volume was published in 1883, however, new manuscripts from Luther's early years or students' lecture notes were discovered. Among these were the lectures on the Psalms (1513-15) and on Romans (1515-16). These discoveries had a story of its own. Not unlike the discovery of the Dead Sea Scroll in 1947, these discoveries generated an enormous literature which has been called "the Luther Renaissance."19

Sometime in the fall in 1515 the young Doctor of Sacred Theology at the University of Wittenberg, Saxony, began to lecture on Romans until about the sametime the following year 1516. He never repeated his lectures on Romans. The manuscript was thought to have been lost. It was only in recent times that the original was found in the Prussian State Library at Berlin and was thus published in 1908. Almost four hundred years later!

Holl's renewal of Lutheranism has come to be known as the Luther-Renaissance and, in Bense's assessment,20 was marked by three main features: an

unprecedented use of newly available resources, emphasis on Luther's personal view and idea: their origin and development than relying on the confessional writings, and narrow down his treatment to particular aspects of Luther's thought and work.

Commenting on Karl Holl, Lohse was of the opinion that Holl was the first to combine historical and systematic perspectives in his study of Luther and was better able than anyone else to place Luther in the context of the history of theology.21 He said that Holl was able to present his version of Reformation theology that it became the centre of the contemporary theological discussion.22 and skillfully investigated into the historical genesis of the problem and then traced the historical development of certain aspects of Luther's thought.

Holl's Luther study was not without its limitation, however. Lohse summed up criticism of Holl chiefly surrounded on that Holl's understanding of ethics did not do justice to Luther, that his assertion that Luther taught "a religion of conscience" was not valid, that Holl was using the authority of Luther in public support of the nationalistic conservative political movement.23 In defense for Holl, Lohse took note that Holl died before he could play an active role in the political and theological controversies which began to emerge. Lohse said if he had, the theological discussion might have followed quite a different path.24 Carl E. Braaten, however, complained that Holl misread Luther's meaning of justification by faith. He said Holl taught that Luther rejected justification was defined as a declarative judgment of God whereby the sinner was justified solely on the basis of the work of Christ.25 For Braaten, Holl was simply talking Ritschlian theology in Kantian language.26

We are today again faced with the task of finding a fresh approach to the Reformer. Eberhard Jungel took notice that whoever would speak of Luther's significance for contemporary theology can do so in various ways. For Jungel to inquire into Luther's significance for contemporary theology no doubt means to inquire theologically, i.e. to inquire into the truth of faith.27 For Jungel

contemporary theology is plagued by so many false alternatives that it speaks to everything and to everyone for its chief dilemma is its lack of orientation.28 A question must be raised at this juncture: is it too much arrogant to say that contemporary theology is suffering from a lack of orientation29 because it is so caught up in the hermeneutic crisis.

It is precisely that Luther is first of all an interpreter of the Holy Scriptures that he is significant to contemporary theological discussion especially in view of the current hermeneutical disorganization. How did Luther read the Bible? How did he shift from the old way to the new way which later on in history known as the Luther's hermeneutics that shaped the entire history of Protestantism. Where lies his assurance (or his cocksureness) of his interpretation and findings.

The image of Luther as an agitator and controversialist had overshadowed him as a commentator of the Holy Scriptures and a first class exegete. It is common negligence that, in the mind of general public, his name is not associated with the production of commentaries or serious exegetical achievement. Skevington Wood had catalogued such a remark by H. S. Nash such as "of the reformers Luther did little strictly exegetical work apart from his preaching."30 Such opinion usually reflects more of careless negligence than honest scholarship. It must be remembered that Luther held the chair of biblical exegesis at a highly reputable university in Germany for over thirty years, and his published commentaries, just to set the record straight, covered both the Old and New Testament.

When the current discussion about Scriptures focuses on the questions of interpretation and hermeneutics, then Luther's hermeneutical approach has something to say to us, because there is amble reason for us today, as noted well by Robert Grant, the reviving theological interpretation of the Bible to look back to Luther.31 Wood reminded us that it was precisely from the chair of biblical exegesis and in the fulfillment of his professional duties as Doctor of Theology that Luther was brought to understand that the key to Scriptures lies in a proper interpretation of the meaning of God's righteousness.32 When he died in 1546

Luther was still, for the major part of it, a teaching professor, a Doctor of Sacred Scripture. Unlike what B. A. Gerrish tried to impress that the title "doctor" or "teacher" probably comes nearer than any other to the heart of Luther's self-understanding,33 but Luther was never hard up for a Ph.D. The famous conversation with Staupitz, under the pear tree in the garden of the monastery courtyard, is a piece of good testimony. Luther gave Staupitz fifteen excuses or reasons why he did not need a Doctorate degree. For Luther, in 1509 he graduated at Erfurt was the end of his education. As he himself often explained, it was simply as he fulfilled his academic function of expounding the Word of God that the Reformation was effected. His academic training put him in a position that he did not ask for: should this have any bearing for his self-understanding, it was not more than he was trying to be honest and faithful to his calling and vacation, a point Gerrish also admits.34

CHAPTER FOUR

Luther: the Man

ONCE UPON A TIME IN MOEHRA, A LITTLE VILLAGE JUST SOUTH west of the Thuringian Forest in the neighbourhood of Eisenach of Germany, dwelt there an ancient and numerous family of the name of Luther. It was customary then with the Thuringian peasants that family lands passed intact to the youngest son, so Hans Luther was forced to leave his home village with his wife, Margaret Lindemann, and probably with a son and went to settle in the little town of Eisleben in Saxony.1

Some years back in the last decade, out of curiosity, drawing genealogical record constructed by Otto Clemen and Eberhard Mattles, Ian Siggins researched into the maiden name of Luther's mother and ascertained her name as Margaret Lindemann.2 At home she was known as Hanna. Siggins has turned out a body of information about Lindemann's kinfolk, and young Martin's relationship with them, that threw a new light on Luther's early life, his social outlook, his mother's influence, and his religious development.

The Lindemanns were already a well-established and respected family of Eisenach burghers, as discovered by Siggins.3 Among the Lindemanns there were city councillor, mayor, citizen, and even during Luther's life time, he got cousins of professor of medicine, councillor, doctor of civil and canon law, pastor, schoolmaster, university docent and the like.4 We are now better able to understand what Melanchthon's report that Hanna came "from an ancient and

honorable family of Eisenach."5 Historians have been quite puzzled over the reason why Hans Luther moved to Eisleben.

Therefore when Hans Luther and his family moved to Eisleben was apparently connected by the fact that Hanna's oldest brother, the father of Johann II and Caspar Lindemann, was already a burgher of that town.6 With this, Siggins was able to conclude that with native energy and the established status of his wife's relations Hans Luther soon became a member of the Mansfeld civic "committee of four" and a prominent personality in the mining industry.7

It was not known for how long they had been living at Eisleben when the baby arrived on the tenth of November, one hour before midnight. Margaret Lindemann was certain enough of the day of Martin's birth, she was uncertain about the year. She used to tell Philip Melanchthon it was 1483.8 Luther's brother James, however, had a record and Martin himself acknowledged that he was born in the year 1483, a date also substantiated by the Libra Decanorum, the dean's book of the University of Wittenberg.9 The young father that very morning took his infant son to the Church of St. Peter's to have him baptized by Pastor Bartholomaeus Rennebecher.10 It was also the Feast of St. Martin, he name the baby Martin.11 It was also a difficult time for Hans Luther for the death of his father had left him with little besides a growing family and the choice to leave the old Moehra.12

Since Eisenach's economic prosperity was somewhat in decline, fortune did not smile on Hans Luther and his family in Eisleben. Before young Martin was a year old, the family gathered its few possessions in 1484 and moved to the small town of Mansfeld, which was near the Harz Mountains, about 10 miles away, and old Hans found himself employed in a copper mine.13 It was here in the Eisleben-Mansfeld that within seven years Hans Luther had started his own enterprise in the copper business and in 1491 became a member of the Mansfeld civic "committee of four"--that virtually made him a councillor, by 1511 he was part-owner of six shafts and two foundries. Ian Siggins could now explain that all this

was not without kindness from the Lindemanns.14 Probably the economic recession in Eisenach had diluted class consciousness between the burgher Lindemanns and the Luther.15

Mansfeld was about the same size as Eisleben, lay about five miles to the northwest and ten miles from Sangershausen. Citing from Spangenberg, Schwiebert described the town as one of hills, meadows, woods, and plains, and the town was surrounded by a formidable wall with four strong towers.16 Near the center of the town was a church square, and next to the church was the city school, the Ratsschule, which was later renamed in honor of the Reformer.17

When he was still young enough to be carried, Hans Luther sent his son to the local grammar school, which he attended nearly every day for eight years, and later in 1497 he spent a year at Magdeburg, a year later to Eisenach, and from there in 1501 to University of Erfurt. It was not at all unusual that children went to school one or two years younger than the customary age of seven and Melanchthon had it that he was carried to school by an old family friend.18

Luther's biographers no longer entertain the pathetic picture of a poverty-stricken lad who sang from door to door to win his daily bread. Such a picture hardly fits into the frame provided by the historical records of a family that belonged to the better burghers of the town.19 Siggins uncovered that tradition dictated that a schoolboy should "sing for his supper" in the streets as a waif, a Partekenhengst and, this was not the fruit of penury rather of custom.20

Schwiebert also came to agree that the severity of Luther's childhood, likewise, has been overemphasized.21 Indeed it was true that Luther's mother might have carried firewood on her back during those early years, so did the wives of other German burghers in the fifteenth century.22 Severity was a common practice in those days. Luther recalled the old days when "school teachers were as cruel as hangmen," and he himself was beaten fifteen times one morning for having failed to memorize his Latin conjugations and declensions.23 So did

Melanchthon received daily beatings at Pforzheim some years later, thus argued Schwiebert.24 The point is perhaps, for Luther, despite the connection of the Lindemann, life was not necessary always on a bed of roses. Social economic life in general, and life in a copper mine in particular, in fifteenth-century Germany was, as indicated by Kittelson, far worse than working in a modern coal mime.25 Those remarks that Luther made about his early childhood, as Walther von Loewenich might thought, was simply expressing his respect for his parents and at the same time pointing out that in the past people were more efficient and unassuming.26

In any event, Luther lived in hard times. As uncovered by Kittelson, 61 percent of the infants in Florence at the height of the Renaissance were either stillborn or died within six months;27 the Plaque swept across European continent, other diseases, such as syphilis, not unlike Aids in our days, came to torment European lovers; social outcast, beggars and homeless, mained, insane, and mentally retarded people could be seen on every street of every village and city.28 Kittelson said, "Life at the turn of the sixteenth century was not just the times that were hard. The people were hardened by the world in which they lived."29

The Mansfeld school that Luther attended was a Trivialschule, which taught Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric.30 The chief purpose was to force the students to learn to read and write Latin--not humanistic Latin, but medieval Latin--in preparation for their later studies, and they also learn church hymns.31 The young pupils also learned the Benedicite, the prayer before meals, and the Gratias, the Confitor, or the confession of Sins, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Decalogue, the Hail Mary, and other rudiments of religious piety.32

Shortly before Easter of 1497, at the age of 13, Luther had learned Latin well enough to be sent away to school to Magdeburg.33 There he lived and studied at a foundation operated by the Brethren of the Common Life, an extremely pious lay religious organization that was widely known.34 The Brethren of Common Life did not have a school building of their own, they made use of the Cathedral

School. This piece of fact has confused historian for many years.35 School life in Magdeburg was short. It appeared he was particularly impressed by Prince Wilheim of Anholt, who walked through the streets as a Franciscan friar, carrying his beggar's sack and he had so castigated himself that he resembled death itself that as Luther put it, "Those who saw him just shook their heads at his devotion and felt ashamed of their own standing."36 During leisure hour, he joined his classmates as they roamed the streets in the children's choirs, and these were the origin of the modern practice of caroling.37

Given the religious life of the Brethren of Common Life it was not at all unusual that Luther first discovered a complete Bible there with them. Many tried to argue for a late day of this event and postponed it to Erfurt. Skevington Wood in his finding, drawing from various conflicting sources, remarked that the discrepancies indicate that "the narrative rests on an insecure historical foundation and acquired a number of purely fictitious accretion, designed to underline the alleged neglect of the Scriptures during the Middle Ages."38 As reported by Wood, Charles Beard as far back as 1889 had already noticed the suspicious features and by 1903 several errors were corrected by Julius Kostlin and Georg Kawerau. Wood said in his finding that the Scriptures was not so seriously ignored in the Middle Ages as had been formerly imagined.39 The majority of scholars today, having re-examined the Erfurt story, and careful comparison of the Tischreden account with other writings both from Luther's own and elsewhere would accept that the best informed on this story would be Veit Dietrich who acted as Luther's amanuensis for sometime before he returned to preach in St. Sebaled's Church in his native Nurnberg.[40]

Citing Veit Dietrich in detail:

> Once as a boy he happened on a Bible where by chance he read the story concerning the mother of Samuel in the Book of Kings [sic]. The Book pleased him greatly and he thought that he

> would be fortunate if he should ever be able to possess such a book. Shortly afterwards he bought a postil; this pleased him greatly because it contained more Gospels than it was customary to teach during the course of the year. When he was made a monk he gave up all his books. A short time before he had purchased the Corpus Juris and I do not know what other books. He took none of them with him into the monastery except Plautus and Virgil. There the monks gave him a Bible bound in red leather.[41]

The Dietrich account, which covers the period from boyhood to the entry into the monastery, would seem to place Luther's first contact with the Scriptures in his boyhood in Magdeburg where the Brethren of the Common Life sought to encourage their pupils to study the Holy Scriptures, and indeed this experience had nurtured the young mind of Luther for the rest of his life.

Schwiebert and Wood further observed that Bible in those days was not a rare item. Schwiebert has estimated that, within fifty years from 1466, there were already fourteen High German and four Low German editions in print.42 About the same period, Wood, citing M. Reu, gave the figure that between twenty and twenty-seven thousand copies of the Vulgate were printed in Germany before 1520.[43]

The Brethren of Common Life lad unusual emphasis on the Scriptures and were active in the distribution of Bibles. Their aim was to foster a higher level of Christian life and devotion in the Church. It was not at all unreasonable that young Luther had not actually seen a complete Bible till then, for at Mansfeld class lessons, unlike school in our days, did not involve much school text books. They used blackboard and wax tablets.44

At Eastertime in 1498 Martin was brought back to Mansfeld. Here is a point in Luther's early life that historians always could not certain about the reason as

to why suddenly Luther was called to school at Eisenach. Siggins asserts that it was direct influence of the Lindemann family. In his finding, Luther's maternal uncle Heinrich was made mayor the year before.45 Hans Luther, by now, must have been sufficiently prosperous in the copper mine, wished his son that he should make "an honorable and wealth marriage, and enter the law."46 The Lindemann influence was most aggressive in the direction of Luther's education and, here we have a piece from Melanchthon that "on the advice of his kinsfolk, who believed that cleverness and eloquence as great as his should be brought out into the open and into public affairs, he began the study of law."47 Some years later Luther did opt for laws.

At the advice of the Lindemanns, probably, Hans Luther sent his son to the parish school of St. George's at Eisenach in Thuringia. Eisenach was then a principal city in Thuringia, and Scheel estimated that it had 420 houses and a population of 2,100.48 At the foot of the high hill upon which towered the lofty Wartburg Castle, stood there the little Franciscan monastery which had been founded by a prominent enterprising family in town, the Schalbes.49

Historians, again, have been wondering whom the young Luther was logging with. This is well answered by Siggins: among his mother's people. There was a legend portraying that a pious widow as Ursula Cotta, nee Schalbe, widow of Kurt Cotta, took pity on the young boy begging his bread from door to door. After much research into the matter, Siggins with help from some genealogies came to conclude that the Lindemanns, Schalbes, and Cottas were all part of the same patrician circle of Eisenach burghers and were closely related.50 This Lindemanns circle provided the city its magistrates and municipal officers.51 Luther spent the best of his early adolescence at Eisenach.

Luther's three years at Eisenach saw a change of far greater significance for his future development both in his educational training and religious consciousness. There at the Georgenschule he found teacher who could awaken his mind and intellect. This teacher, the rector (headmaster), one John Trebonins,

must have had impressed Luther deeply. A second teacher of distinction was Wiegand Geldennupf. In the words of Kittelson, these teacher must had much to teach than rote memorization of Latin vocabulary, declensions, and conjugations. Trebonius and Geldennupf must had recognized Luther's ability, and undoubtedly played a part to recommend the seventeenth-year old lad to the university.52 Years later in 1526 Luther tried to obtain a pension for Weigand Geldennupf from the Elector.53

Apart from class and cultural aspirations, the piety which was characteristic of Luther's Eisenach circle of relatives must have impressed him more than the Brethren of Common Life. Luther named his host as one Heinrich Schalbe, who became mayor of Eisenach, was an intimate and devotee of the Franciscans. Siggins thought that he was related by blood to the Lindemanns, probably a brother to Hanna.54

Luther learned of Johann Hilten from Heinrich Schulle. Hilten's plight had left some impression on Luther.55 At his adolescent years at Eisenach, Luther was, in addition to these personalities, also influenced by Johann Braun, the vicar of St. Mary's and superior of the Franciscan monastery at the foot of the Wartburg. On top of these, however, said Siggins that it was the preaching and the sermons Luther heard when he attended church with his Eisenach community that potentially and significantly shaped and formed the development of Luther's religious consciousness during his adolescent years.56

Lohse has posed several questions about Luther's childhood and upbringing which could not be easily answered satisfactorily. He said, among the established facts about Luther's early background, the most conspicuous fact is that nothing in Luther's childhood and adolescence indicates the nature of his later life and work.57 Luther's experience in Magdeburg and Eisenach, said Lohse, were important for his development. It was here that Luther met some of his life long friends, the atmosphere of these homes reflected their Franciscan

piety, music was cultivated in these families, his experience of congenial domestic living, made significant and positive impact on Luther.58

C H A P T E R F I V E

Luther: Development of Religious Consciousness

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH TO A STUDY of Luther's hermeneutical thinking is not of its chronology nor a catalogue of events rather an attempt to trace the various factors, intra-personal or otherwise, that had contributed to the content of his religious consciousness. The point is not that we do not have a Luther rather how to describe him fairly. As Lohse noted well that every period of interpretation of Luther must be critically evaluated in terms of all that we know about Luther himself and at the same time he warned of the vulnerability of misunderstanding even in the midst of presenting various aspects of the "genuine" Luther, simply because the history of Luther interpretation is still for the most part a history of misunderstandings.1 James Kittelson proposed that two factors must be taken into consideration for a proper understanding of Luther.2 In the first place, said Kittelson, Luther had a public career that transcended its own time and still draws attention today, and second, he was a historical figure someone who had an accessible personality.3 The underlying assumption of this is that Luther is understandable and that the man and his career explain one another.4

In 1958 Erik H. Erikson in his attempt to redefine Freudian psychoanalysis into his own psychosocial theory of personality had attempted to trace the

theological and religious development of young Luther back to conflict with his father and the breakdown of his mother.5 Erikson was trained under Freudian school of psychoanalysis and by the nineteen-sixties, Freudian theory of personality came under revision. Psychologists such as Carl Jung, Alfred Adler offered "primal urges" and "collective consciousness" to replace Freud's definition of sex drive as the basic motivating force of personality; others Neo-Freudians were people like Hartmann, Kris, Rapaport worked on expanding Freud's account of ego; still other groups, like Karen Horney and Erich Fromm sought to balance the social factor in the overemphasized biological influence of personality in Freudian theory.6 All this belonged to an age when it was fashionable to think that psychiatry was the next frontier of history. Since then many rose in reaction against Erikson's treatment of Luther, chiefly Roland H. Bainton.7 Such reaction was not confined only to the theological camp.

Brian A. Farrel in 1981 in his evaluation of psycho-analysis said limitation of psychodrama theories to explain historical characters and events is far more severe than first realize.8 He added the analysis of historical characters and events must meet two, but impossible to satisfy, conditions: namely, the questions posed must be beyond the understanding of common sense and science and, the availability of information that resemble psychoanalysis case material.9 These two obstacles have greatly restricted the practical usefulness of psychoanalysis and, if any, the theoretical validity of its application to biographical study.

Erikson dreamed to psychoanalyze great men in history; but Robert Lifton had pointed out that great men tend to be inaccessible to direct psychoanalysis; or if accessible, not yet great.10 Lifton was equally aware of the problem of "observation from a distance" when the great man is centuries removed from the analysts. Lifton's greater concern, however, was the extent to which any individual person, great or otherwise, can exemplify an entire historical epoch in term of collective psychological struggle:11 this being so because there is an implicit

assumption that the larger historical universe is nothing but a manifestation of the projections or emanations of the individual psyche.12

Inspite of all this, Lohse does not completely rule out a medical interpretation of great character. He said, however, such a medical view, as far as Luther is concern, must made room to accommodate the presence of religious and theological dimensions and discover at what specific point such motives play a decisive role.13

To the contrary of popular belief, the Middle Ages was intensively and extensively religious and precisely because of this, Loewenich insisted, that allowed the Reformation to capture the imagination of an entire nation.14 Kittelson had made a point when he said that the religion practiced by people of the sixteenth-century was much like the world in which they lived. The struggle for spiritual security was intensified with the search for economic security.15 The principal thought that acquisition of wealth and prosperity came only through hardwork was applied to religious salvation. The recurrent themes in medieval religious culture played alternately upon fear and hope, death and immortality, fire and brimstone and judgment of God and, sins and confession, contrition and penance were ways to salvation and avoidance of eternal punishment by fire. These themes were deliberately transmitted to the lay populace in its parochial preaching and religious propaganda and the expected impact was ensured.

Ian Siggins, concluding his study,16 asserted that it was these themes which expressed in preaching coupled with its homiletical rhetorics that had a far greater influence to the formation of Luther's religious consciousness than other formal training he might have received before entrance to monastery or that which he received while in there, namely, nominalist theology. Siggins argued for a need to study the style and content of sermons in a study of Luther and the Reformation.17 Loewenich also took note that sermons were far more numerous than earlier thought in the Middle Ages.18

In the finding of Siggins, model sermons were widely used and within a shared outline, a preacher might exercised his rhetorical skill to fill in the content with great variety of style.19 The sermons usually grouped around in four categories: sophisticated scholastic sermons, popular mission sermons, devotional and mystical sermons, and weekly sermons.20 The direction and orientation of these sermons, to cite Siggins, were found "injunction to penance, descriptions of uprightness and transgression, rules for improvement of life, exhortations to contrition, accounts of the harrowing of the heart, calculations of duty and threats of purgatory not in the careful and precise calculus of the learned, but.....in the language in which they were actually addressed to the people."21 In a broad and general term, Siggins divided up that the Dominican preachers favoured the didactic style: noted for its use of scriptural proof texts, fairly literal, used of exemplary stories for illustration; while the Franciscans, not always though, were the great exponents of the tropological style: namely the use of allegories with direct pastoral application, used of allusive visual imageries, symbols, legend, etc.22

Siggins also observed that their choices of theme and attitudes were rather surprisingly consistent.23 The themes of wrath of God, hell and death were particularly widely manipulated in sermons with graphical language. As reported by Roland H. Bainton that a book published in 1493 by Hartmann Schedel in Nurnberg contained a full-page woodcut portraying Christ the Judge sitting upon a rainbow presented a picture of the last Judgment24 and inevitability of hell.

Karl Holl, for a different purpose which does not immediately concern us here, carved a picture of how the concepts of God and His judgment which prevailing in the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages had played decisive role in the religious life of the common people. In Holl's understanding, there were in effect two parallel concepts of God running through the history of Christian theology from the time of Tertullian.25 He said the philosophical concept of God pictured Him as the Unapproachable, stern judge.26 This concept is closely related

to the idea of judgment after death awaiting even the saved believers. For Holl, the idea of judgment was primitive and must or should be done away with by the hope for an early return of Christ.[27] (We must remember how Harnack had criticized Holl.) Parallel to this was the idea of merit which was turned into an spiritual instrument by which human could exert moral pressure on God.28 By this way, Holl had identified the basic tension of Western theology in its inability to overcome the antithesis between God as he is in himself and God as he can be moved by human being.29 This antithesis had been carried to its extreme extent by Scholasticism both in Aquinas and Scotus in the development of a philosophical concept of God and, in Abelard and Bernard of Clairvaux in the meritorious concept. Sin was conceived began only with a violation of the natural law and God was expected to reward merit with blessedness. The Scholastics tried to bring a harmony to this tension, following Augustine, the sacrament was said to "infuse" a supernatural power working ex opere operato, and this concept was extended to the discussion of righteousness.30 Siggins thought that most of the medieval doctrine, namely, grace, rewards and merits, venial and mortal sins, almsgiving and the works of holy mercy, the strict accounting of judgment, the intercession of the saints, the pains of purgatory and the horrors of hell, were all directed to evoke contrition.31 In actual fact, said Siggins, the medieval preachers proclaimed a doctrine of justification by contrition alone.32 While the bishops, monks and parish pastors were busy finding a solution to the problem of practical faith, the scholastic theologians were equally busy finding a problem to these solutions as how penance should work.

The preachers spoke with one voice, and the message conveyed by the sermon books advocated a belief that sincere repentance brings God's forgiveness before and apart from sacramental penance, and therefore, in Siggins finding, there was overwhelming emphasis on the need for deepest sincerity and humble self-examination.33 Incidentally, much of these similar themes of medieval piety, years later, reappeared in Puritanical revivalism.

Death was an intimate theme in the medieval preaching. The Christians were urged upon the urgent need for preparation for death especially so the preaching of one Johnannes Gritsch who capitalized on the severity of judgment, the opportunity for grace, uncertainty of one's status before God, and certitude of the peril of death.34 Siggins asserted that it was the question of death or the witness of it in his family became the immediate cause that drove Luther to the monastery.35 Death was no stranger to the family of Hans Luther. Kittelson reported that a younger brother of Martin died at infancy,36 and two other died of the plague just after Luther was ordained to the priesthood.37 Luther himself was directly threatened by the prospect of death at two occasions.

In a general observation the homiletics in the Middle Ages was trying to simplify religious piety for the common folks. Such attempt, however, had unwittingly distorted the gospel and gave the people a false sense of spiritual security that promoted a cycle of religious life surrounding sin, judgment, righteousness by contrition, confession and penance. The common folks believed as content of faith all that which was preached. Luther never forgot what he saw of Prince William of Anhalt; and the image of Christ as a stern judge seated on his throne, coming from one side of his head was a lily, a symbol for resurrection and from the other side came a sword, apparently had deeply impressed young Luther and testified that he was utterly terror-strucken at the sight of Christ the Judge.38 The urgent question was how to avoid the judgment.39 The church taught that one must not wait until his deathbed to make an act of contrition or plead for grace.40 For all fairness, the church meant to be helpful to the devouts, and that people had to be purged of all sins, the church offered sacraments, pilgrimages, indulgences and the intercession of the saints.41

Endless confession has a dynamic of pitfall of its own which need not immediately concern us here at this juncture. Theologians of the day were not completely unaware of it. They expressed their concern that such rigorous confessional habits might drive pious, simple and sensitive people into perpetual

despair with the thought that God had not forgiven me or I have not confess enough for Him to do so or that I have fallen deep into sin for God to help me, etc.42 In the midst of it, the dangers of an incomplete confession reinforced itself into more cycles of sins, contrition, confession and penance. The fear was very real with the common people that one might get up to heaven but only stay out by the gate.43

Bainton thought it was the ideal of monasticism that exerted an internal force that drove Luther to the monastery.44 It was a common thought that monasticism was the way par excellence to heaven and thereby salvation.45 Again the immediate cause that drove Luther to the monastery could not easily be identified. Correctly understood, all this might have played a role to influence and contributed to the shaping and development of Luther religious consciousness in his early life. Kittelson said it well that the religion that Martin Luther learned was very much like the world in which he lived that good fortune was earned by good hardwork; the church was trying to be helpful, yet hardwork was still essential.[46]

CHAPTER SIX

Luther: The University Years

LUTHER SPENT THREE YEARS IN SCHOOL IN EISENACH. IN MAY 1501 when Luther was not quite eighteen years old, he matriculated at the University of Erfurt. He probably had two choices of university: Leipzig, which was nearer to home, and Erfurt, which was more advance.[1] By now father Luther had became a city councillor and sufficient prosperous in his copper mining business, and coupled with the influence from the Lindemanns, the choice of Erfurt was not completely unreasonable.

Erfurt was then one of the three or four largest cities in Germany. It was rich, fertile part of the Thuringian basin, where wine garden, orchards, flax, hemps, and various grains were important sources of wealth.2 Erfurt made an unsuccessful attempt to gain independent. It came under the archbishopric of Mainz in matter of ecclesiastical affairs, and the sovereignty of Albertine Saxony in politics.3 Erfurt was also known for its hills, woods, streams, and the spires of many churches especially the majestic Erfurt cathedral.[4]

The university itself was one of the old, well-established universities of Europe with a history traceable back to the early fourteenth century. Unlike modern university the building was no more than necessary structures,5 and in Luther's day it enrolled about 2,000 students.6 When Luther arrived at the university, he wrote his name as Martinus Ludher de Mansfeld and he was assigned to his dormitory or Bursen which was more like a monastery then a living quarter for university students.7 Life in ancient university was hard, controlled, disciplined: in the observation of Atkinson, a life not entirely unlike that of the students in a theological seminary today.8

Lohse thought that Luther's studies in Erfurt were of special significance for his later development.9 Subsequent research revealed that Luther's studies in Erfurt was confined to the liberal arts. It was true that the faculty of arts could not be equated with the later faculty of philosophy;10 nonetheless, it did equip Luther with a critical mind, skill in reasoning and creative thinking that we witness the full force of its power years later in his contention with the Church.

The Liberal Arts or "free" arts consisted of the Trivium (grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric) and the Quadrivium (arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and music). The dialectic, namely, logic formed the core of the Trivium.11 According to Melanchthon he read most of the old Latin.12 This apparently so. By the fall of 1502 he had already completed the Trivium and the baccalaureate examination, and moved to the study of natural, metaphysical, and ethical writings of Aristotle and Quadrivium.

Luther studied the quadrivium under Jodokus Trutvetter of Eisenach and Bartholomaus Arnoldi von Usingen. Trutvetter was an able professor. He deplored the sophistry of Scholasticism and simplified the dialectics of Occam and Biel.13 Luther saw Erfurt going through a transitional period. Jacob Bronowski said, not in much details though, Erfurt was also the centre of the conflict between the scholastics and the humanists.14

The dominant intellectual mood at Erfurt was that of Nominalists, or sometime called the via moderna ("the modern way"). It exercised considerable influence over many leading theologians of the late medieval period. McGrath in his finding has observed that both university and monastery were dominated by the via moderna and Luther followed this school until his Tower Experience.15 `

William of Occam (1290-1350) rose in reaction against what was thought as the Scotists misinterpretation of Aristotle. It was said that this misinterpretation was influence due, partly, to St. Augustine, Avicenna, or Porphyry. Bertrand Russell, relying on Ernest E. Moody, said that Occam's main concern was to restore a pure Aristotle, freed from both Augustinian and Arabic influences.16

In order to appreciate this and its subsequent influence on Luther or how he disentangled himself away from these philosophical conflicts, we must remember the quarrel between Rationalism and empiricism for, as Garforth puts it, from the fourth century B.C. to the time of Renaissance the dominant view was that of rationalism.17 As to this, Garforth said that this long history of rationalism was possible because of the powerful influence on subsequent thinkers, and reinforced by Christian theology and the authority of the medieval church. Garforth said that to the Christian thinkers the other-worldliness and non-materialism of Plato were deeply congenial; and believed the sufficiency of divine revelation as source of essential knowledge and the human reason or the intellectual alone was adequate to produce from its own resources the desired picture of reality thus gave little urgency to empirical investigation of the natural world.18 Aristotle was at heart a rationalist with a strong empirical bent of mind and believed convincingly in the sovereignty of reason.19 From the death of Aristotle in 322 B.C. down to the time of Renaissance the empirical outlook was submerged but never lost. Later the Peripatetics (the followers of Aristotle) developed his method of investigation that enabled important discoveries in astronomy were made and the subsequent development of practical sciences. The empirical outlook, however, was eclipsed by the influence of Plato, Aristotle and Christian theology at that time until the thirteenth century came the recognition that knowledge of the natural world comes by inductive inference from patient observation and supported by experiment of nature itself. Roger Bacon (ca. 1214-ca.1294), one must not confuse him with Francis Bacon of the sixteenth century, and William of Occam (Ockham) advocated the movement from rationalism to empiricism. These men not only emphasized the importance of experience and observation in the discovery of truth, but also attempted to formulate rules for inductive inference and outlined a scientific method.20 Roger Bacon in contrary to St.Thomas Aquinas held that the active intellect is a substance separated from the soul in essence, and Occam has equal concern in politic and philosophy. Occam,

best known for a maxim which is not found in his work, i.e. the Occam's "razor", entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem (One must not assume the existence of more entities that are necessary to account for experience). Occam was the last scholastics. Of all the schoolmen, Occam was the one whom Luther preferred.

Occam must be understood together and as against St. Thomas Aquinas (1224/5-1274) and the factors that gave rise to his theology. St. Thomas's chief concern was to find a solution to the discussion about the relative roles of religion and philosophy as means to truth, and of his own theory of knowledge.21 The religion under discussion at that time was not limited to Christian religion. Greek philosophy right from its beginning at pre-Socratic time already acquired a good taste of religion. The Christian thinkers reacted differently toward the Greek treatment of religious thought and philosophy. Tertullian asserted Christian theology must have nothing to do with Greek philosophy; and he insisted that the truth as revealed in the Christian religion was sufficient. He even viewed as harmful the dependence upon Greek philosophy in discussion of Christian theology.

St. Augustine of Hippo who was a Greek philosopher trained in Platonism, on the other hand, adopted a more lenient attitude toward philosophy and made good use of Greek philosophy in his discussion of Christian theology. St. Augustine taught that reason (Greek philosophy) and faith (Christian theology) were not in conflict and thus he placed philosophy dependent upon theology, reason upon faith--credo ut intellegam.

By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, the Arabian philosopher Averroes (1126-98) who was also an authority on Aristotle reversed this order and upset the balance achieved then. He placed theology (not necessary must be Christian theology though) under philosophy. Averroes asserted that interpretation of scriptures must only be done by professional philosophers. He

had his support in Aristotle. St. Thomas sought to provide a possible solution to the issue.

Very briefly, St. Thomas insisted that theology and philosophy must be two separated disciplines, each of them autonomous in its own rightful place.22 He gave recognition to the possible common area overlap between them. St. Thomas thought that there might be truths which attainable by theology through revelation and other by philosophy through natural reason, and still other accessible to both theology and philosophy such as our knowledge of God's existence and of some aspects of his nature. For St. Thomas there were two ways of knowing--the way of faith and the way of reason, and he made the knowledge of God the common goal of theology and philosophy. Thus St. Thomas avoided the two extremes of Tertullian and Averroes. He also avoided St. Augustine's subordination of reason to faith.

In philosophy, St. Thomas was an empiricist. For him, knowledge is the product of intellect working from materials supplied by sense perception. He asserted that there is no innate knowledge and the mind is dependent on sensation both for its contents and its ability to operate. St. Thomas attributed to the mind the natural means and inclination tends beyond sense perception toward the immaterial reality, and the material world manifests the immaterial and points towards it. Thus St. Thomas was able to construct his metaphysics and knowledge of God by natural theology. That is the theoretical foundation of St. Thomas's fourfold (actually five of them) arguments for the existence of God.

He begun with a criticism against the doctrine of self-evident of the existence of God, and repudiated St. Anselm's ontological argument that the idea of God must exist outside our mind "that than which no greater can be thought" in that it presumes a knowledge of his essential nature which is not permissible directly through sense experience, that it is illegitimate to proceed from a conceptual order to that of existence, i.e. from idea to fact. For St. Anselm argued that the idea of perfection includes actual existence. St. Anselm's arguments was a

priori: namely, premises or principles formulated into concepts by the intellect (rational deduction) independent of experience or via pure conception of it. In this respect St. Anselm was more Platonic. He was also an Augustinian monk. St. Thomas found unsatisfactory Augustinian argument that the truth must exist, and God is Truth, therefore God must exist. Yet it is by no means self-evident that this truth is that First Truth which is God nor can one maintain that the existence of God is known only through faith.

Whereas St. Thomas approached the question of existence of God from an empirical induction through the existence of creatures (a posteriori). To be sure, none of St. Thomas's idea was original: all of them could be found in Aristotle, especially so of his "unmoved mover" as the first cause of motion. The notion of motion and change must be understood in the Aristotelian sense of movement from potentiality to actuality. He termed the unmoved mover or first mover God. St. Thomas's second argument or proof derived from a chain of efficient causation in which every effect has an efficient cause and since there cannot be an infinite series of efficient causes, there must be a first cause, "which all men call God." The third proof he argued from the analysis of the possible (or contingent) and the necessary. He identified as God the necessary being which brings into being nonexistent. He proposed an argument from the degrees of perfection, goodness, truth, beauty, etc., a proof of a highest being which is the cause of the goodness; and this is called God. The fifth proof argued from the orderly arrangement, design and governance of the world. We are not concern here with what can be said of these proofs nor are they proofs in the strict sense nor a critique of St. Thomas nor his critique of St. Anselm.

William of Occam was a Franciscan monk also trained in Aristotelian philosophy, but, could not fully agree with St. Thomas's proof of existence of God. It must be said at this juncture that Occam's attack was immediately upon Duns Scotus (1266-1307). Roger Bacon, William of Occam and Scotus were the three great Franciscan philosophers and they also marked the evening years of

scholasticism. They were trained in Oxford. Scotus composed some fine treatise on the Metaphysics of Aristotle, a treatise on the First Principle (De Primo Principio), and two commentaries on Peter Lombard's Sentences, which Luther had lectured on it years later at Erfurt.

The Franciscan had a long history in opposition to Thomas; they, not rejecting Aristotle altogether, followed more of Augustinian-Platonic traditions. For the Franciscans thought that the intellect was of less important than the will, and the ethical-religious content of Christianity more significant than theoretical constructions of the faith.23 Scotus attacked certain principles of the dominant philosophy, rejected the union of Christianity with Aristotle's philosophy and denied the demonstrableness of faith.24 Thus he opened the way to deny the possibility of scholasticism altogether. Scotus took side with Avicenna (980-1037) who was also an Arabian philosopher against the Arabian philosopher Averroes, believing that the object of theology is God and that the object of philosophy is being.25 Unlike Avicenna, Scotus took a pessimistic view of the powers of the human intellect which for Avicenna the soul can be grasped or understood only by the intellect.26 For Scotus faith is the basis of the highest truth; faith and love are based on the will; thus the will is superior to the intellect.27 Scotus also agreed with St. Thomas that theology and philosophy are two separate disciplines and not subordinate to one another. He did this in the interest of faith; but meanwhile unwittingly set free philosophy. Averroes regarded Aristotle's philosophy to be the only means of reaching absolute truth.

Thus it was in this way via Arabian philosophers in Spain that Aristotle was reintroduced second-handedly into the Latin World at a time when universities were developing into its full force with faculties and syllabuses and degrees. Theology together with law, medicine and Arts were taught to an unusually high standard. Soon it was realized and became a problem the difficulties of reconciling what was promoted by the books of philosophers with those aspects of Christian doctrines which dealt with the same or closely-related subjects.28 Some attempt

was made by the Pope to ban the teaching of Aristotle; but it was largely St. Thomas who revived the study and learning of Aristotle in universities then. Not long after the death of St. Francis, the Franciscan Order began to compete with the Dominicans in scholarship and as a direct result of this greater emphasis was placed upon the study of theology. The major issue of contention was what to do with Aristotle.29

By the fourteenth century scholars began to take side as between the "old way" and the Via Moderna. The Via Moderna was closely associated with William of Occam. He made a completely new approach to old question of the relationship between words and things, hence universals are signs which are not universal in their own being, and their "universality" lies in their significations, not in themselves. To the Nominalism language was regarded merely as a set of conventional symbols devised by man to signify things. Occam's nominalism was generally directed against Scotus; the doctrine of relation, that of causality, and particularly the objectivity of universals.30 The Nominalism had carried even further the treatment that unaided natural reason could not prove or unprove faith and theology, and they simply wiped the field of provable theological truth from the scholastic map.31 According to Occam, as he pushed from St. Thomas and Scotus, only particulars exist and all our knowledge begins with particulars; and therefore the general concepts or universals are not real in the scholastic sense at all. but are abstractions of the thinking mind, mere ways of expressing qualities which are common to many particular things. Hence Occam's epistemology is inductive empiricism, that is, intuition or perception is capable of bringing about a grasp in the intellect of the object without a "space" to act as a vehicle, and abstract knowledge can be seen to proceed from sense perception. We abstract, he argued, from the particular objects the qualities common to them, and thereby form concepts or universals. We have no special faculty of the mind, or intellect, for this, and therefore, universals or general concepts exist only as ideas or

thoughts in the mind which expressed in words or conventional signs. At this point we must remember Occam's razor.

For Occam, abstract knowledge is necessarily true by deductive reasoning or the syllogism derived from experience first by induction. Experience, then, is the source of our knowledge, and all knowledge that transcends experience is a mere matter of faith. Following from this, for Occam, it is impossible to demonstrate the existence of God either ontologically (as St. Anselm) or rational reasoning or from experience. For Occam, reason cannot establish that every line of causation must lead to the same first cause; hence it cannot prove that there is but one God. Occam would have nothing to do with the chain of cause and effect which seemed to St. Thomas Aquinas so powerful a proof of the existence of God. Whereas faith cannot be rendered intelligible to reason. In the areas of faith we are wholly dependent on revelation for the certainty of the truths of religions. Philosophy and theology do not play into each other's hand.

We do not know in full how well Luther was informed about the intricacy of the philosophical conflict in his university years. We must also refrain to read into Luther's philosophic concern with a re-reading of history of philosophy from our vantage point. Apparently he must have given some thought to it again at least in monastery. Paralleled to the development of logical-critical attitudes in via moderna in philosophy and theology, was a rise in historico-critical studies concerned with establishing accurate texts of the works of St. Augustine and other texts. In the finding of McGrath, a distinctive school of thought emerged during the late fourteenth century which combined both logical-critical and historical-critical attitudes into what is now know as "modern Augustinian school" centered at Oxford and Paris.32 The end of the Middle Ages was marked by a great diversity in theological endeavour, and in a sense, had lost direction. With the fresh approach of the humanists to textual criticism began to throw new light on the study of the Holy Scriptures. New possibilities for theological science became apparent.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Luther: the monk

LUTHER STUDIED ARISTOTLE'S PHYSICS, METAPHYSICS, and ethics for his Master's degree and was graduated on January 7, 1505. Hans Luther was very proud of his son and a decision was made to send the young Master to law school. He even bought his son a gift a copy of *Corpus Juris Civilis*, a principal law text book of the time.[1] He was required to lecture in the faculty of arts for two more years which he began on April 24; his legal studies began on May 20.[2]

This was a crucial period, yet we do not know enough what was on in his mind. His inaugural lecture as master of arts started in February and the beginning of his new responsibilities, and he must have been thinking about his immediate personal prospect while making ready to lecture in April. May came, he then began law studies. Only a month later, in June that year he took an unaccountable, but officially authorized, leave of absence to go home on foot to Mansfeld to visit his parents. He remained at Mansfeld for about a week. Reason for that was not clear; however, Martin Brecht thought of two reasons: he wanted to stop law studies, or Hans Luther wanted him for an honorable and rich marriage for his son.3 In any event, but by his own testimony he was unhappy.4 Ian Siggins thought that Luther was in a troubled state of introspective sadness (tentatio tristitiae) over his spiritual status.5 Conjecture has been made by Roland Bainton that his depression was over the prospect of death.6 Siggins citing an incident at Easter in 1503 or 1504 on a trip from Erfurt to his home in Mansfeld, he accidently slashed his leg on his sword--the sword slipped out and he impaled himself on it.7 The sword ruptured the cephalic artery. He was alone in the field except for one

companion, about half a mile from Erfurt. As according to the record,8 he could not stand up, so he lay on his back and put his leg in the air, and bleeded profusely and he pressed his finger on the wound. The leg swelled to an astounding size. Eventually a doctor was brought from the city and dressed the wound. As he waited, the record went on, he was in danger of death, and said:"O, Mary, help!" Later that night, in bed, the wound hemorrhaged again; as he faded, again he invoked Mary. No mention was made about making a vow here. Should this record and the incident be true, it was not unlikely that for two long years that Luther must have been thinking on the prospect of death. Giving no specific detail, Siggins cited another record of a similar accident befalling one of his brother, who cut a vein in a knee and was near death.9 Melanchthon when commenting on Luther's Anfechtung and "conversion" also observed that Luther thought earnestly about the wrath of God or somekind of near death panic experience.10 Otto Scheel and his associates would thought that Luther's boyhood was no different from that of any other Catholic youth and, his decision was sudden, spontaneous, unpremeditated act, the direct outgrowth of his great fright in the thunderstorm.11 At any rate, we could not attribute Luther's decision to enter monastery to a single-factor cause, for we just do not know in detail the content of his Anfechtung. Granted, his Anfechtung might or might not be the immediate cause that drove him to the monastery, for the most severe Anfechtung did not appear until in the monastery. It is not at all unreasonable, as Loewenich puts it, that Luther had previously entertained the thought of entering the monastery.12

Around June 30 Luther set out from Mansfeld to return to the university at Erfurt. To travel on foot with that distance, several days each way, required considerable effort, purpose and human will. Luther was diligent and self-motivated. By July 2, a Wednesday, the day of Mary's Visitation, he was only a few hours, about six kilometers from Erfurt, when approaching the town of Stotternheim, a thunderstorm overtook him. A bolt of lightning struck next him, and he was threw to the ground by the sere force of air pressure. It must be a

terrifying event. To the common folk in Luther's day, as suggested by Siggins, climatic disturbances were construed as special messenger from God to remind human beings of sudden death and to urge them to seek God's mercy and grace.13 Otto Scheel also made the same point here.14 Luther lived at a time when most of the people took their religious life seriously. In panic and by his religious instinct, he cried out, "St. Anne, help! I will become a monk!"

St. Anne was the patron saint of miners. He might have called to mind the similar experience back in 1503 when he called upon St. Mary to help him. Loewenich even thought that the memories of Eisenach community exerted an influence on him more than he himself was aware of.15 Later in 1521 in reminiscent, Luther said of the event that he did not become a monk of his own free will and desire, still less to gain any gratification of the flesh, but he was walled in by the terror and the agony of sudden death and forced by necessity to take the vow.16 He further admitted later on September 9, 1521 in a letter to Melanchthon that anyone who made such a vow in order to achieve salvation made it in an ungodly way. He said, "I am uncertain with what kind of an attitude I took my vow. I was more overpowered than drawn. God wanted it this way. I am afraid that I, too, may have taken my vow in an impious an sacrilegious way."17 Roland H. Bainton thought that Luther was attracted to the monastic ideal and entered monastery in order to save his own soul, just like thousands of others.18 Luther had not told his parents of his decision beforehand,19 at least not until he had already entered the monastery. He regretted the decision; nevertheless, he insisted to honour the vow inspite his friends advised otherwise. He felt bound: God wanted it so. In the final analysis, as Loewenich puts it, Luther's entrance into monastery was neither an accident of fate nor a tragedy, but an act of divine providence: God wanted it so.[20]

Luther entered the convent at Erfurt. He waited about two weeks, and on July 17, 1505 he applied for admission to the "Black Cloister", the chapter house of the Hermits of St. Augustine. His father was furious: to Hans Luther, he had lost

his insurance policy, and the family's security. Hans Luther expressed his doubt whether his son Martin had misinterpreted what had happened. Luther responded he could pray for them.21

Luther gathered his best friends on July 16, 1505 in the quarters he had been given as a master of arts and a member of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Erfurt bid them farewell.22 He hoped his friends would accompany him to the cloister the next day. When his friends tried to restrain him, he told them, "Today you see me, but never again." Then with tears in their eyes they went along.23 He never thought he would leave the monastery; in his own words, he had completely died to the world.24

Not all who knocked on the doors would be admitted. He was placed first on probation allowed time for conscientious self-examination until September to prove that his decision "was of God" and, he was observed by the brothers and the prior to see whether he was suited for life in the order. Meanwhile, Hans Luther reluctantly sent in his consent, probably only after two of Luther's brothers had died.25 As a rule, he was required to give away all his personal possession, because no one could enter a monastery with personal property. Technically, a monk was a friar, a kind of religious beggar.26 By early September 1505, about six weeks after his entrance into the monastery, at the age of twenty one years old, in a solemn reception Luther's was accepted as a novice. The period of his novitiate would last one year.27 He was presumably given a copy of the Latin Bible, bound in red leather.28 At the conclusion of one year, Luther was allowed to make his profession which took place in September 1506. He was then officially a monk. Soon after his profession Luther was told that he bad been selected to the priesthood and, he was required to study Gabriel Biel's Canon of the Mass. Gabriel Biel was a Tubingen professor and an Occamist. That also marked the beginning of Luther's life long theological study. Less than half a year later, on February 27, 1507, Luther was ordained into the priesthood in the Erfurt Cathedral and, few months later on May 2, 1507 he celebrated his first Mass. It was an important

occasion, for his father accepted the invitation and rode into Erfurt with a cavalcade of 20 companions and donated a good sum of 20 gold gulden to the Black Cloister.29

After his first Mass, Luther was placed under one Father Johann Nathin to begin his formal theological study. Along with the general studies required by the monastery, he studied Gabriel Biel's Collectorium. Nathin conducted extensive lectures on the Sentences of Peter Lombard.30 The Sentences was usually the introduction to dogmatic theology for beginners. He would used the glosa ordinaria, a very important reference on biblical interpretation in Medieval exegesis,31 and the biblical commentary of Nicholas of Lyra who used literal rather than the allegorical method of interpretation.32 Luther took his study very seriously so much so that later in his life he could still quote them from memory.33

Gabriel Biel (ca. 1420-1495) modified Occam's dichotomy between faith and reason in a way that allowed the Word of God alone conveys the whole of revelatory truth though, reason could legitimately be used to interpret and confirm it.34 Some years later in his Disputation against Scholastic Theology, Luther attacked Biel. In other place, Luther said of Biel "it is all very good, except when he talks about grace, love, hope, faith and the virtue. Then he is a Pelagian."35

Peter Lombard (ca.1100-1166) followed St. Augustine in his conception of sin, predestination, grace, faith and justification. His Sentences was the standard textbook of theology throughout the Middle Ages. Luther spoke of him as a "great man", and except of his views on justification which were "too thin and weak" he approved him generally, because he stressed faith rather than reason.36

Luther had already studied Occam during his university years at Erfurt. Occam in his writing, Dialogus,37 laid emphasis on the infallibility of the Holy Scriptures. The authority of the Scriptures rests on its divine inspiration. He thought that the Scriptures is instinct with the Holy Spirit. He advocated the Scriptures is binding or what follows from it as a logical consequence. In his own

words, "what is not contained in the Scriptures, or cannot with necessary and obvious consistency be deduced from the contents of the same, no Christian needs to believe." Occam also appeal to the Fathers that he thought in them as the continuing disclosures of the Holy Spirit. Luther later realized the loopholes contains therein this statement. Occam further suggested as noted previously that unaided human reason is incapable of arriving at sure knowledge of God and the methods and approach of philosophy, valid in their own right perhaps, possess no value or relevance when applied to that which can be apprehended only through revelation.

Occam was limited. Reinhold Seeberg commented on him, "In spite of the fact that in principle the Scriptures are acknowledged as the sole authority, positive interest in discovering Scriptures truth is almost entirely absent. In the last analysis, the real interest of Occam as well as of many of his contemporaries, in stressing the authority of the Scriptures, was to secure a means of criticism by which the authority of the Church's dogmas could be shaken, or the dialectics with which they were upheld at least be made more complicated. By stressing the sole authority of the Scriptures the Nominalists also helped to prepare the way for the coming of the Reformation. By this ecclesiastical positivism, however, they impeded its progress mightily and
contributed very little toward the work of rediscovering fundamental Scriptures truth."38

In October 1508, when he was in the middle of his theological studies at Erfurt, Luther was suddenly transferred to the Augustinian monastery in Wittenberg by Johann von Staupitz, the vicar-general of the order, to lecture on moral philosophy in the faculty of arts in the University of Wittenberg which founded in 1502 by the Elector Frederick the Wise.39 Luther lectured on Aristotle's Nochomachean Ethics until 1509.40 He did not quite like it.41 It was from the theological faculty of University of Wittenberg that Luther received the degree of bachelor of Baccalaureus Biblicus in March 1509.42 In the fall of the same year,

he became a Sententiar--one who lectures on the Sentences of Peter Lombard.43 Lohse thought that Luther and Staupitz got to know one another much better during Luther's sojourn in Wittenberg in 1509-9.44

In October 1509, a year after he was in Wittenberg, before he could deliver his fist lecture on the Sentences, he was called back to Erfurt, perhaps Johann Nathin wanted him back in Erfurt.45 Luther's lecture notes on Nichomachean Ethics have not been preserved, but his working copies of Lombard and of some of the writings of St. Augustine have been preserved.46 He worked through that book carefully.47 He said of St. Augustine "cannot be praised too highly."48 It was his practice to write in the margin his own lecture material, and by his critical faculty he was able to establish the work On the Recognition of the True Life and De spiritu et anima were not genuine St. Augustine's writing on stylistic grounds,49 and the De spiritu et anima merely contained the thoughts of St. Augustine. It was also during these period that Luther began to learn Hebrew with the textbook written by Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522), the great-uncle of Melanchthon, who was the first Greek scholar in Germany and the first Hebrew scholar of the Renaissance.50 He was a controversial figure, but did not join the Reformation.51

In January 1510 the main building of the university of Erfurt with its fine library was burned down by craftsmen, apprentices and journeymen in an open revolt against the Town Council over oppressive taxation and mismanagement.[52] The Chairman of the Council was executed in the course of revolt.[53] Their grievances were legitimate,[54] but Luther condemned the uprising at the time as well as later.[55] In November the same year, Luther, together with one Johann Lang from his cloister, was sent to Rome on some formal business for his monastery. They returned in March 1511.[56] Luther supported a compromise proposed by Staupitz, as against the majority of the Erfurt cloister.57 Lang later was expelled from Erfurt and ended up in Wittenberg,58 and in early April the same year Luther was also exiled to the Augustinian house in Wittenberg.59 Loewenich attached not

much significance for Luther's development his journey to Rome on that it took root only later and of its ambivalent character.[60] Lohse thought that Luther's impression came as his recollection of the event in a later date.[61] Perhaps, he learned more in quite a different way from his exile to Wittenberg where he took up permanent residence.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Luther: His Anfechtung

WHEN LUTHER HAD SETTLED DOWN IN WITTENBERG, STAUPITZ suggested to him to become a doctor and a preacher.[1] He was the house preacher of the cloister. The suggestion was reported to have taken place under a pear tree.[2] Luther in reply gave Staupitz fifteen excuses why he did not need a doctorate degree.[3] Luther finally agreed to the suggestion not until when Staupitz impressed his authority on Luther. Later Luther said of this that he was called to do this work, and he was compelled to become a doctor without any initiative of his own but out of pure obedience.[4]

On October 4, 1512, a year later after the suggestion, and some persuasion made by Staupitz, the Elector Frederick the Wise agreed to supply the funds on condition that Luther be appointed for life to the chair of *lectura in Biblia*, a position formerly occupied by Staupitz, Luther received the *licencia magistrandi,* the permission to apply for the candidate for the doctorate.[5] Two weeks later on October 18, 1512, for two days in the Castle Church, the degree of Doctor of Theology was conferred upon Luther after five years of graduate work.6 He engaged in the required disputations, took his oath on the Bible to teach only true doctrine and to report all who promoted falsehood, and was invested with the doctor's insignia of Bible, cap, and ring.[7] The institution was conducted by Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, who later became leader to the radical wing of the Reformation. Luther was officially received into the Senate of the Faculty of Theology three days later, and began to lecture on Genesis the following week.[8]

Luther's life from now on, unlike the years before 1512 or the time he came to Wittenberg that many factors in his early life still remained obscure, could be

traced exactly.9 He began his academic career in 1512, or some would put it in 1513, and continued this work of teaching the Bible chapter by chapter for the next more that thirty years.

We do not know exactly when Luther's Anfechtung began.[10] Skevington Wood thought it took place at his reception into the Augustinian cloister at Erfurt.[11] His entrance into the monastery should have given him peace of mind and spiritual comfort. He wanted God's mercy and peace. He determined to be a good monk. He sought to love God with all his heart, all his strength, and all his mind. Somewhere, somewhere during the five years of graduate work he became very confused in his thinking. He fell into deep despair. Some might think that he had gone mad. This despair was known to history as *tentatio tristitiae*, a sort of nervous fear over his sins coupled with the fear of judgment to come. It was first apparent in 1513 in his lectures on the Psalms.[12] Anfechtung was what Luther in later years talk about as that grinding sense of being utterly lost. Staupitz knew about it. He thought Luther might turn better if more work was given to him by teaching theology and as a means to express his thinking. Staupitz was the one whom Luther often confessed to as required by Catholic piety.

As he said years later, "When I was a monk, I believed that it was all up with my salvation. Each time I experienced the temptations of the flesh, that is to say, a number of evil desires, such as anger, hatred, jealousy, in regard to a brother, etc., I tried all kinds of remedies. I confessed daily, but it was of no avail; the covetousness always returned. This is the reason why I could find no peace, but was perpetually in torment, thinking: "You have committed such and such a sin. You are still the victim of jealousy and concupiscence; in vain you have joined the order. All your good works are useless."[13] This problem prolonged until his Turmerlebnis sometime in 1514. Luther said of his problem that he was very pious in the monastery, yet he was sad because he thought God was not gracious to him.[14]

In all likely hood his *Anfechtung* was deeply connected with the question of confession and absolution: the forgiveness of sin, or at least the experience that his sin was actually forgiven by God during his confession of it. In trying to understand Luther's problem, Kittelson said of it as a tension between trying so hard to be holy and knowing that he was not.[15] In Luther's words, "though I lived as a monk beyond reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God, with an extremely disturbed conscience."[16]

As a monk Luther had been trained in disciplined self-analysis. The demand of perfect humility by the ideal of Augustinian monastery drove him to discovered that self-centeredness is the motivating drive of the human heart.[17] He subjected himself to self-flagellation, prayers, fasts, deprivations, and mortifications of the flesh in hope to have peace with God.

There was confession (and penance) which, as reported by Kittelson, Luther came to despise.[18] In their attempts to be holy, monks were required to purge themselves of their sins by confession as quickly as they committed them. Thus monks and nuns were seen doing confession several times a day. The confessor would probe to uncover motives, emotions, thoughts, and even repressed feelings to purge them of their sins.[19] Yet the most horrifying event came immediately after confession that suddenly a thought or an emotion that contradicted was remembered. A confessor must then be sought again. Luther was personally well experienced the terror of onslaught of this vicious psychology. This torment of mind was also experienced in confession made in prayers. He once said, "When it is touched by this passing inundation of the eternal, the soul feels and drinks nothing but eternal punishment....."[20] Yet the purging of every failing was an integral part of monastic life and spiritual piety.

Penance is closely related to confession. True penance had four requirements: a firm intention not to sin further or to backslide; a reverential fear of God; grief and truly sorry for one's sins; shame caused by the lost of wholeness which form the greatest part of penitence.[21] The teaching went out that the

cleansing of the soul is effected by frequent outpourings of tears.[22] Yet, noted Siggins, excessive and pervasive sorrow for sin was assumed to be the normal mark of the penitent.[23] Citing Herolt and Werden, Siggins observed that it was taught in the Middle Ages that true contrition of heart is infused by God alone, and contrition must be specific to deal in turn with each particular sin.[24] In addition, even every recollection of sins past must evoke a renewed act of contrition. In short, the resounding message throughout the whole of this period was persistently call to the common folk to a sincere repentance and contrition of heart as a promise of spiritual rebirth. Luther, like many of his own time, was sucked into a religious culture of devout, strict, duties of the virtues, nature of true contrition, consciousness of death and spiritual piety. Finally Luther's Anfechtung narrowed down to the question of the worthiness and status of people before God.[25]

To Luther the urgent question for Christian spiritual life then was not a question of the nature of God; rather how could the righteous God be begged, cajoled, or propitiated into being merciful to individual sinners?[26] It was also a question concerned God's purposes in the here and now.[27] Expressed in his own way, Luther said, "God must therefore be left to himself in his own majesty, for in this regard we have nothing to do with him, nor has he willed that we have anything to do with him."[28] These remarks must be understood against the background that God as a righteous judge rewards the good and punish the wicked. God was God. Righteousness was therefore characteristic of God.

Parallel to what Luther learned in monastery and the University of Wittenberg, there was other informal traditions of piety and solution to the problem of sin and guilt. Mystics such as Thomas a Kempis and Johannes Tauler offered a way of salvation by meditations in the quiet places of the soul.[29] To the mystics the travail of the soul meant the birth of God in the soul:[30] the mystics were busy at a vigorous preparation of the soul to make it worthy of God's indwelling.[31] The mystics invented sufferings, tormenting themselves;[32] Whereas for Luther, his

torment came from the tension between his obedience to the prescription which he was taught and the teaching in the Holy Scriptures.

About the same time when Luther journeyed to Rome in 1511, Desiderius Erasmus (1466?-1536), the humanist, published in many languages his The Praise of Folly and was read everywhere at once. Erasmus voiced the discontent of the powerful minds of his age.[33] The monks and the Schoolmen had ceased to be a vital intellectual force and no longer commanded respect. They were seen merely as figures of pomp, and of obedience without respect, and could not reached the minds of their hearers.

Erasmus became an Augustinian monk at the age of twenty-one, a priest in 1492. He was disappointed with the theology and intellectual life of his time and the church. He travelled throughout Europe, and met Thomas More in England; began to learn Greek at the age of thirty-four, and published an edition of Greek New Testament in 1516. Earlier on in 1501 he wrote a Handbook of a Christian Warrior in which he introduced the piety of the Brethren of the Common Life. Erasmus and Luther had a long and bitter relationship. Luther rejected humanism in his theological concern.

The theology that Luther was taught amounted to a covenant theology between God and man. Alister McGrath in his independent study has well summarized it:

> God has entered into a covenant or contract (the Latin word pactum is used to express this idea) with humanity. This covenant (or contract) lays down certain conditions that must be met before it is possible to be justified. God has promised that he will justify anyone who meets the precondition that the individual turn to God in faith and humility. Both faith and humility are human works, which the individual may achieve without the assistance of the divine grace. Once this precondition has been met,

> God is under a self-imposed obligation (because of his promise) to justify the individual in question. God is gracious towards humanity in that he has established a framework within which an individual may be justified through a minimum effort. Nevertheless, a definite and specific human effort is required.[34]

Kittelson making a similar observation wrote that in this covenant "a place was found for human initiative. Individual Christians had active role to play in their own salvation. All that was necessary was to fulfil the human side of the covenant."[35] He said this theology made such good sense in the late Middle Ages that it was narrowed down to the slogan: "God will not refuse grace to those who do what is within them."[36] McGrath further observed that it was incredible for the people at the late Middle Ages that God should give the sinner any special assistance in the matter of salvation.[37] God must not be seen to practise favouritism. All must meet the required condition without divine help. In this way the "righteousness of God" (iustitia Dei) was taught and thus understood as an impersonal attribute or characteristic of God, which stands over and against us and judges us with complete impartiality and all fairness.38 Total obedience was imperative to fulfil the preconditions for justification: whosoever had met the basic preconditions of faith and humility, God's verdict is justification, so as he had promised.

As Luther pressed to its logical extreme the Medieval prescription for spiritual peace he soon discovered that true religion was far more than just the proper inclination of the heart or earnest attempts in all sincerity to work out one's salvation, for every time he tried to do more good work and work harder, the more he found that all he was doing was focusing his attention on himself.[39] He named this self-motivating force concupiscentia, the totality of humanity.[40] For he was quite certain that the sincerity of the confession and of the acts of penance that followed and every act good it might be became yet another sin as it was issued

from the concupiscentia. It became clear to Luther that it was impossible to fulfil the preconditions demanded by the righteous God.[41]

Luther's Anfechtung took a new turn when he read of the doctrine of predestination of St. Augustine that God in his incomprehensible will has already elected some for salvation and some for damnation.[42] In this manner, to Luther, God had acted in disregard to human work. When this was considered together with St. Augustine's teaching on justification[43] that it was not a forensic act, not the declaration of the forgiveness by God because of faith in Christ's suffering; rather justification was a lifelong process, an infusion of righteousness and God's grace, furthermore in the Medieval plan of salvation that applied only to the elect, then God de facto is a villain.[44] But when Luther later discovered otherwise, he said of St. Augustine had not expressed himself adequately concerning the imputation of righteousness. In Luther's words, "At first I devoured, not merely read, Augustine. But when the door was opened for me in Paul, so that I understood what justification by faith is, it was all over with Augustine."[45]

The door in Paul for Luther did not open until he began if not earlier to lecture on the Epistle of Romans. Until then Luther's Anfechtung still remained: Wie kriege ich ein en gnadigen Gott? (How can I find a gracious God?). The answer came in Luther's exegetical search into the Holy Scriptures. In this way, a discussion of Luther's hermeneutical thinking cannot be disassociate from his theological development and his biographical events. For Luther's theology by and large consists an impressive existential character and a good measure of autobiographical element. To understand both his theology and exegesis must first seek to understand Luther the Christian and a Bible teacher.

During his entire period of teaching Bible in University of Wittenberg from 1512-1546, Luther covered thirteen books of the Holy Scriptures. He usually lectured only twice a week apart from other official duties he was holding and regular preaching which he would do several times a week. Although it still remains a debatable question and without extant manuscripts, it was very likely

that Luther began his teaching career with a series of lecture on Genesis. Should this be correct, Eric W. Gritsch thought it would then be between October 25, 1512 to 1513.46 In any event he returned to lecture on Genesis from 1535-1545, just before his death.

We are quite certain that Luther began to lecture on the Psalms in the summer of 1513. A priest from Hildersheim, Johann Oldecop in his diary confirmed that Luther was lecturing on the Psalms in 1513.[47] This set of lectures on the Psalms Dictata super Psalterium of 1513 to 1515 must not be confused with the second set of lectures on the Psalms from 1518 to 1521 known as Operationes in Psalmos, for Luther lectured twice on the Psalms. Lecture material was prepared in summer and actual delivery of them began on August 13, 1513. It was apparent that he made best use of the latest commentary of his day: the Psalterium Quintuplex by the French Humanist Lefevre d'Etaples, the commentaries of Nicholas of Lyra and Paul of Burges.[48] It seems that he might have some difficulty with Johannes Reuchlin's De Rudiments Hebraicis.

The Dictata super Psalterium lectures was a crucial moment in Luther's theological as well as exegetical development. It was in this study of the Psalms that led Luther to a new understanding of God's righteousness from which the definition of justification by faith became determined and crystallized during his lectures on Romans. It is also in the Dictata we began to witness the first bud how Luther questioned and interrogate with the Holy Scriptures with theology as a critical tool. There is a saying in the circles of scientists that to a given problem asking the right question is far essential that finding the right answer to a wrong question. It appeared Luther had more than just hit at the good art of asking the right question: for the question must bring out the contour of the problem more clearly.[49] We must also bring to mind that Luther was trained under empirical induction in methodological skill. That served him well. Luther, as Skevington Wood described him, in a creative fashion by seizing on the biblical fulcrum of

justification by faith and using it to move the entire structure of belief into a new position.[50]

The document on Dictata super Psalterium was discovered in 1885 and 1886.[51] We could not possibly cover all aspects of Luther's method of exposition in the Dictata; nevertheless some major exegetical factor could be identified. Yet we must not make a strict distinction between Luther's exegetical method per se and theological notions which Luther had identified, for Luther's theology all and all is hermeneutical in character.

In his early lectures on Psalms, Luther still used the traditional or typical Medieval method by using brief note (Glossae) written between the lines and in the margins, and sections of commentary Scholia. A gloss on a text is a brief linguistic explanation of a word or clause or even a whole sentence (sort of word study). A scholion is a short prose comment on a word, or phrase or sentence of a biblical text. It might run up to a paragraph or even several pages. The Scholia made up Luther's commentary proper. The fact that Luther did not prepare the Glassae and Scholia together would make it somewhat difficult to recover how Luther actually delivered these lectures.[52] It appeared that he first worked out a few Glossae to some dozens of Psalms and then worked on the Scholia. By 1518 in his second series lecture on the Psalms, however, Luther abandoned the Glossae and Scholia. In doing so, he made an important break with tradition.[53] Luther was using the Latin Bible. In addition he also used the Five-Fold Psalter in parallel languages: Latin, Gallic, Roman, Hebraic, Old Itala.[54] It appeared that Luther dictated to his student, hence the word Dictata, and he might not follow the notes verbatim.[55]

In these early lecture on the Psalms Luther was still typical scholastic and the text was presented as having four-fold sense. Lohse said that it seems Luther was, in this respect, even less advanced than Nicholas of Lyra and Faber Stapulensis.[56] Lohse observed at the same time, however, Luther used the four-fold sense directed toward a Christological interpretation,[57] making it more

superior than his contemporaries. Lohse further observed that Luther at this early stage, was already making distinguish between flesh, spirit and letter and, God's relationship with man and the world.[58] Sigigns were visible then Luther thought of the hiddeness of God, a feature became prominent in his understanding of God.

The most unique features of Luther's early lectures on the Psalms were the theological themes that became apparent in these lectures. These themes understandably were related to his Anfechtung, and in this way it was clear that Luther sought in the Scriptures for a solution to his personal religious anxiety, and that his theology constituted the significant content of his faith. Thus Luther's theology is hermeneutical in character. These themes as identified by Bernhard Lohse, were judgment, self-accusation, humbling oneself, and confessing oneself to be a sinner, righteousness, justification, and grace the central focus of his theology.

These themes were not strange to the Medieval theological circle; however, Luther presented them in a new perspective. Erich Vogelsang thought that Luther combined in a creative manner a tropological into a christological interpretation, which formed the key to Luther's subsequent theological formulation,[60] particularly his discovery of God's righteousness. He seized on Lefevre who made a two-fold literal sense: literal-historical and literal-prophetic, the later which points at Christ and thus reflects the intention of the Spirit.[61] This prophetic interpretation was no strange thing in Medieval exegesis either, for instance St. Augustine made a different between the letter and the Spirit. Luther, however, equate the Spirit as Christ, and the righteousness of God as the person of Christ,[62] whereby the righteousness of God could no longer be a punitive justice by which God punish the wicked and reward the good. In this connection Luther understood Christ as the grace of God. He further, by application of tropological rule, step into the realm of faith and related righteousness of God as grace in Christ to the individual.[63]

On this basis Luther was able to comment on Psalm 28 with this: They do not understand that it is in Christ alone they will be justified, and not by their own work. Those who seek to be saved without Christ are the very men who do not understand God's work in Christ.64 Further down he said, "They think those dreadful works of their are necessary. Else, have they ever understood the phrase "the works of the Lord".....as spiritual works of faith discernible by faith?"

That was not alone. Luther was also giving hints that he made a distinguish between law and gospel. Commenting on Psalm 72 he wrote this: The Gospel is called by many other names: the law of Christ, the law of peace, the law of grace.....It is not to be marvelled at why "grace" or the "law of grace" (which is the same thing) is both judgment and righteousness. What must be seen is this: without a doubt, in that He judges, He justifies him who believes in Him.[65] For Luther the Gospel is the verdict of God's righteousness. Further down on Psalms 72, he said, "When I say the Gospel is judgment and righteousness, that should be understood as referring to the Gospel in its entirety, i.e. as completely fulfilled. The Gospel itself fulfilled and made complete by the operation of God is judgment and righteousness, by which Christ rules the Church.....[Wherefore the Gospel, when it is fulfilled, is judgment and righteousness, the work of God, the way of God, and all the rest of these terms, just as Christ in his person is all these things written of Him in the Scripture.][66]

CHAPTER NINE

Luther: Rediscovery of the Gospel

THE MOST EXCITING MOMENT FOR LUTHER DURING HIS LECTURES on the Psalms perhaps came when he came to Psalm 30/31, and onwards, and in particular Psalm 70/71. Luther intermingled in a curious way exegetical and theological features into a solution for his religious anxiety.

As in his recollection Luther said, "When under the papacy I read, "In thy righteousness deliver me" (Ps. 31:1) and "in thy truth", [1] thought at once that this righteousness was an avenging anger, namely the wrath of God. I hated Paul with all my heart when I read that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel (Rom 1:16, 17)." When he came to Psalm 70/71, he found the same phrase "In thy righteousness deliver me." Unlike on Psalm 30/31 in which case he merely underlined the relevant phrase "thy righteousness"[2] and added a few of his own word, Luther expanded on the same phrase when he came to Psalm 70/71.

Luther first directed his student to the individual words in v. 1 and he said. "One who has not yet lost hope in mammon and all the world and himself cannot hope in God. Neither will be not be confounded forever."[3]

It is essential to recognize that for Luther the transition of his understanding of God's righteousness from that by which God condemns us and makes us condemn what we are in ourselves to an objective righteousness of God was definitely taking place during his lecture in the Psalms. Vogelsang was quite certain that from the Scholia he was able to show that Luther had discovered the light, that Paul's message, "The just shall live by faith," had taken on new meaning.[4]

By now in 1514, commenting on v. 15, towards the end Luther said, "Here you must apply your whole logic, for the letters show the word, and the word the

idea. Thus the Law denotes the Gospel, and the Gospel, Christ. And as the uneducated person sees and grasps the letters only in a material sense, not as symbols of words, so the Jews see the Law. And as a barbarian hears the voice and does not understand it, so it is with the person who does not hear the Gospel with understanding and growth."[5] Immediately after this he moved to v. 19 with these word, "In this verse at last the correct distinction between divine and human righteousness is depicted. For the righteousness of God reaches up to the heaven of heavens and causes us to reach. It is righteousness even to the highest, namely, of reaching the highest. Not so the human righteousness, but rather it reaches down to the lowest. This is so because he who exalts himself will be humble, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." [6]

Luther was here speaking in scholastic language. He further stressed on the same verse, "But now the whole righteousness of God is this: To humble oneself into the depth. Such a one comes to the highest, because he first went down to the lowest depth. Here he properly refers to Christ, who is the power of God and the righteousness of God through the greatest supreme glory."[7] Luther was seen here equating God's righteousness with Christ. By a creative twist of the literal-prophetic sense, Luther went on, "The righteousness of God when considered tropologically, for thus it is most often regarded in Scriptures, is that by which God condemns us and makes us condemn what we are in ourselves, the old man as a whole with all his works (even our righteousness, Isaiah 64). So humility is actually humiliation."[8]

To his students, Luther explained, "this is what is called the judgment of God, it is that with which we are wise, just, and humble, or by which we are judged."[9] With these words, it should mark the climax of Luther's lectures on the Psalms and also a ray of hope to his personal religious quest for a gracious God, beginning of a new definition of the righteousness of God in theology and doctrine for the Reformation to come later.

Concluding v. 19 Psalm 70/17, Luther said, "therefore, whoever wants to relish the apostle and other Scriptures must understand everything tropologically: Truth, wisdom, strength, salvation, righteousness, namely, that by which He makes us strong, safe, righteous, wise, etc., So it is with the works of God and the ways of God. All of them are Christ literally, and all of them are faith in him morally."[10]

In the summary of Kittelson, "God judged, but he did so for the purpose of giving miserable human beings his righteousness in Christ."[11] The essential element of Luther's discovery, in Kittelson's conclusion, was this: If God's righteousness was basically something he gave away, and if the act of giving it away was his mercy, then there was no reason for Christians to try to be righteous in his presence on their own account or even "to do what is in them" as preparation for receiving sacramental grace."[12] Later, Luther named his definition of righteousness of God as a passive righteousness or what is known to theology as the objective righteousness.

To be sure there were other Psalms which Luther commented on such as Psalm 21/20 that anticipated the major themes which became prominent in his theology, inter alia, judgment, law and gospel, hiddenness of God, theology of the cross, etc., issued from a christological centered hermeneutics. Much of what Luther said in the Dictata, to be sure, at this early stage of development, both hermeneutically and theologically, as Loewenich observed,[13] were still quite traditional in language and images inspite the fact that the contour of his new insight was clearly visible. The influence of his experience of Anfechtung was obvious and inevitable. The significance was that, as noted earlier,[14] Luther did not consider his experiences to conjoin with the scriptural text into a dialectic hermeneutics.

Lohse brought our attention to the essential significance to understand what Luther meant by that God acts in a hidden way, doing "the opposite" (sub contrario) of what He seems to be doing.[15] For Luther, in the observation of Lohse,

this meant that God's grace is always present as the hidden reality under his judgment,[16] because for Luther, we are only right with God upon our acceptance of God's judgment and acknowledge that we are sinners, and that we attempt to become right with God by doing good work reflects our self-centeredness as the nature of sin. This understanding constitutes the basic ingredient of Luther's definition of sin. In the observation of Bainton, for Luther, the very nature of man is corrupt, and that the entire man is in need of forgiveness.[17]

The category of law and gospel was already discernible in Luther's lectures on the Psalms though not yet as definite as when he came to Galatians. He was oscillating between neo-Platonic Augustinianism and total Paulinism. For Luther, "all that the law says and does is but mere words and signs. The works of the gospel, however, are the works and reality thus signified."[18] The gospel was hidden in the law, for he said, "the gospel was hidden in the law and was therefore unseen, like water in a rock, until Christ tore it apart and broke it open."[19]

The lectures on the Psalms were followed by lectures on Romans which Luther begun on November 3, 1515, and continued about a year until September 7, 1516. Atkinson said it well when he commented on the significance of Luther's lectures on Romans that it virtually contained the whole of the revolutionary theological thrust of the Reformation, though it appeared between one to two years earlier before 1517.[20] Luther never repeated his lectures on Romans and never referred to it again. The manuscript was thought to have been lost. When Melanchthon arrived at the faculty of Wittenberg he took over from Luther to lecture on Romans, and it was apparent that he had access to Luther's manuscript.[21]

It appeared that Veit von Seckendor (1626-92), a Church historian then, mistook it that the manuscript might be in the archives of the Elector and he could not found it there, thus reported to the world the manuscript was lost.[22] In actual fact, as reported by Atkinson, on the contrary, Luther's heirs took good care of it. It was bound in red leather 1582 and the covers impressed with the electoral coat

of arms in gold. Luther's son, Paul Luther, the personal physician to the Elector in 1592 mentioned to the wife of the Elector to have it translated into German, for the original was written in Latin. All these years it was kept with the Luther's family until 1594 the sons of Paul Luther together with all Luther's manuscript and other printed books sold to the personal library of Joachim Frederick, Margrave of Brandenburg; later it was incorporated into the Royal Library of Berlin. The oldest catalogue of the library in 1688 registered Luther's manuscript on Romans, and it was put on public display and exhibition in 1846, three hundredth anniversary of Luther's death. This copy of Luther's manuscript on Romans was in 1905 by the librarian brought to the attention of the world and scrutiny of Luther scholars.

In 1904 a book titled Luther and Lutheranism was published by the Dominican Denifle, an anti-protestant writing, making claim that he made used of the original manuscript of Luther's lecture on Romans which was said to have been found in the Vatican Library. This copy was taken note by a German scholar, Hermann Vogel, when searching material on Melanchthon in the Vatican Library together with other manuscripts of Luther, such as Hebrews. Pope Leo XIII in 1899 opened the Vatican libraries to the academic world.

Later it was learned that the Vatican copy was hand made by Aurifaber under instruction from Ulrich Fugger, a book collector and banker, who sought to preserve Luther's writings. Aurifaber was one of those who took down much of Luther's Table Talk. Fugger later donated them to the Palatine Library of University of Heidelberg, all together some 3,527 manuscripts, until the Thirty Years' War. When in 1622 Emperor Maximilian I of Bavaria captured the Palatinate, he handed the entire library over to Pope Gregory XV.

The Royal Library of Berlin was later renamed as the Prussian State Library of Berlin. In September 1908 Professor Johannes Ficker edited and published the original manuscript, and in 1938 it was brought out in volume 56 of the Weimar Edition.

In his lectures on Romans, Luther had not completely abandoned the Glossae and Scholia which he did by 1518. By now Erasmus had published his edition of Greek New Testament in February, 1516, and Luther had obtained a copy of it by August that same year and he made used of it immediately. Meissinger thought that he could find little improvement in Luther's method of exegesis in his lectures on Romans.[24] Luther was said to begin the study of Greek in 1514 with help from his friend John Lang who was exiled to Wittenberg together with himself in 1511.[25] When Luther begun to use the Greek text, he therefore was a toddle, and only by 1517 or 1518 do we see a more stable and mature Luther when handling Greek and Hebrew. By 1520 Luther quickly became a good linguist and was able to translate the Bible into beautiful German, so much so that his version of the German Bible was in used in Germany until very lately only a modern translation came into being.

Luther in his lectures on Romans, first gave a rough word-for-word explanation, some sort of word study, and then he would comment on the text, the Scholia. This was the "chopping-out method," as described by Schwiebert, was widely used by the scholastic teachers and exegetes which left the students often confused at the end of the day.[26] Yet as cautioned by Skevington Wood we must not underestimate Medieval exegesis.[27]

According to Wood, the real weakness of the Medieval exegesis lay in its stubborn insistence that Scriptures must be interpreted in a fourfold sense or known as the quadriga which was said to begin from Cassian:[28] the literal concerned the historical aspect which later was divided by Lefevre[29] into literal-historical and literal-prophetic; the allegoric dealt on faith by expounding on the spiritual; the moral sense developed rules of life; and the anagogical dealt on future hope. In all fairness, the literal sense was not completely lost, St. Thomas used it quite extensively. Towards the close of the Medieval period, however, changed was taking place, as observed by Montgomery, that the schematization of the Scriptures in interpretation became more and more intensified and in

refinement until counter-Reformation.[30] Over and against this, Luther insisted on the clarity and single meaning of the Scriptures[31] The method of Glossae and Scholia have a history of its own which does not concern us here.

Luther in his lectures on Romans, as could be observed, begun to emerge himself out of the rigidity of the quadriga as well as a greater dependence on reference to other parts of the Scriptures, especially the apostles, for meaning on the relevant text.[32] The glosses were more selective.[33] These disappeared altogether by autumn of 1516 when he came to Galatians, and the quadriga was replaced by an emphasis on the literal sense.

Judgment as a theological theme reappeared immediately at the beginning of Luther's lectures on Romans.[34] He also criticized the current scholastic definition of sin.[35] By the lectures on Romans Luther's understanding of righteousness of God was given a more assertive definition when he said, "For God does not want to save us by our own personal and private righteousness and wisdom. He wants to save us by a righteousness and wisdom apart from and other than this. A righteousness which does not come from ourselves, is not brought to birth by ourselves. It is a righteousness which comes into us from somewhere else. It is not a righteousness which finds its origins on this earth of ours. It is a righteousness which comes from heaven. Therefore we must be instructed in this external and alien righteousness (*extranea*, *externa*, or *aliena iustitia*) in every possible kind of way. That is why the first task is to pull out our own personal and petty righteousness."[36] He further defined this in Rom. 3:4 with this: when we allow God the right to judge us, we are made righteous by God,[37] and we are righteous simply on the basis of God's declaration, therefore, our righteousness does not reside in us or in our power.38 Luther proposed on Rom 4:7ff what later known as the Lutheran formula: *simul justus et peccator* that we are "at the same time both a sinner and a righteousness man; a sinner in fact, but a righteous man by the sure imputation and promise of God....." [39]

Luther also mentioned a new category at the opening of Romans: let God be God which occupied a prominent position in his understanding of God.

Other categories found in the lectures on Romans as identified by Lohse, for instance, were promise and faith, ostensive discussion on the sacraments, church and monasticism.[40]

Of late there is not much discussion on the question when did Luther arrive at his understanding of the "righteousness of God" and the *Turmerlebnis*, the Tower Experience, Lohse thought, could be probably due to the fact that scholars are somewhat tired of the whole issue.[41] John Dillenberger, however, insists that "it makes a difference whether the *Turmerlebnis* represents a moment when Luther came to a fresh understanding of the Gospel, which later underwent extensive transformation, or whether it represents the view of the mature Luther, which is subsequently elaborated with reference to all other problems."[42] In this way, how one defines what Luther's theology is, paradoxically, will determine the point which Luther is seen to have arrived at it.[43]

Unlike St. Augustine who left behind with us his autobiography, the Confessions, in Luther's case we can only rely upon his Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings of 1545[44] which he reluctantly wrote shortly before his death. It is helpful to quote the extract in full because of its significance.

> Meanwhile, I had already during that year returned to interpret the Psalter anew. I had confidence in the fact that 1 was more skilful, after l had lectured in the university on St. Paul's epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, and the one to the Hebrews. I had indeed been captivated with an extra-ordinary ardor for understanding Paul in the Epistle to the Romans. But up till then it was not the cold blood about the heart,but a single word in Chapter 1 [:17], "In it the righteousness of God is revealed," that had stood in my way. For l hated that word "righteousness of God," which, according to the use

and custom of all the teachers, l had been taught to understand philosophically regarding the formal or active righteousness, as they called it, with which God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner.

Though l lived as a monk without reproach, l felt that l was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, l hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, l was angry with God, and said, "As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with his right eousness and wrath!" Thus l raged with a fierce and troubled conscience. Nevertheless,l beat importunate ly upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted.

At last, by the mercy of God, mediating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely,"In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, `He who through faith is right eous shall live.'" There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the right eous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive right eousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live. "Here I felt that I was alto- gether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me. Thereupon I ran through the Scriptures from memory. I also found in other terms an analogy, as,the work of God, that is what God does in us, the power of God, with which he makes us strong, the wisdom of God, with which he makes us wise, the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God.

And I extolled my sweetest word with a love as great as the hatred with which I had before halted

> the word "righteousness of God." Thus that place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise. Later I read Augustine's The Spirit and the Letter, where contrary to hope I found that he, too, interpreted God's righteousness in a similar way, as the right-eousness with which God clothes us when he justifies us. Although this was heretofore said imperfectly and he did not explain all things concerning imputation clearly, it nevertheless was pleasing that God's righteousness with which we are justified was taught.

To this account in the Preface must be added a further descriptions collected by Conrad Cordants in the Tischreden[45] "The words righteous and righteousness of God struck my conscience like lightning. When I heard them I was exceedingly terrified. If God is righteousness (I thought), He must punish. But when by God's grace, I pondered in `the tower and heated room of this building, over the words, "He who through faith is righteous shall live" (Rom. 1:17) and "the righteousness of God" (Rom 3:31), I soon came to the conclusion that if we, as righteous men, ought to live from faith and if the righteousness of God should contribute to the salvation of all who believe, then salvation will not be our merit but God's mercy. My spirit was thereby cheered. For it is by the righteousness of God that we are justified and saved through Christ. These words (which had before terrified me) now became more pleasing to me. The Holy Spirit unveiled the Scriptures for me in this tower"

In another statement reported by Anthony Lauterbach,[46] Luther said "that expression righteousness of God was like a thunderbolt to my heart. When under the papacy I read, "In thy righteousness deliver me" (Ps. 31:1) and "In thy truth," I thought at once that this righteousness was an avenging anger, namely the wrath of God. I hated Paul with all my heart when I read that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:16). Only afterward, when I saw the words that follow--namely, that it is written that the righteous shall live through faith (Rom

1:17)--and in addition I consulted Augustine, was I cheered. When I learned that the righteousness of God is His mercy, and that He makes us righteous through it, a remedy was offered to me in my affliction"

The excerpt just cited is of particular value and interest, as indicated by Skevington Wood in that it harks back to Luther's wrestling with Psalm 30 and 31, and then shows how "only afterward" in the Termerlebnis did he come to a genuine understanding of God's righteousness.[47]

Caspar Heydenreich gave us another excerpt where Luther looked at the same event.48 Luther said, "For a long time I went astray (in monastery) and did not know what I was about. To be sure, I knew something, but I did not know what it was until I came to the text in Romans 1:17, "he who through faith is righteous shall live. That text helped me. There I saw what righteousness Paul was talking about. Earlier in the text I read righteousness, I related the abstract (righteousness) with the concrete (the righteous one) and became sure of my cause. I learned to distinguish between the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of the gospel. I lacked nothing before this except that I made no distinction between the law and the gospel. I regarded both as the same thing and held that there was no difference between Christ and Moses except that times in which they lived and their degrees of perfection. But when I discovered the proper distinction--namely, that the law is one thing and the gospel is another--I made myself free."

Luther in these extracts described a decisive point in his development and it was no incidental occurrence. At first glance it might be read that he was referring throughout to the year 1519 when he was in contact with Karl von Milititz, a Saxon nobleman who was the emissary of the Pope. A closer examination of the extracts, however, will show that, after speaking about his second set of lectures on the Psalms, which began in 1518, he travelled back in his mind still further to his lectures on Romans (1515-1516). "Up till then" he had not grasped the import of righteousness; but "at last" he began to understand, and as

he contemplated Romans 1:17, he felt that he was indeed born again. Now all this seems to point to some time during his lectures on Romans, or his preparation for them, or it could be even while he was delivering his first series on the Psalms in 1512 to 1514.

As noted earlier on in this study, Luther began his academic work as a professor of theology in 1512, and lectured on Psalms in 1513-1514, in 1515-1516 on Romans, in 1516-1517 on Galatians, and in 1517-1518 on Hebrews.

The first great document of Luther's early years as professor of theology was the Dictata super Psalterium, the result of Luther's lectures on the Psalms in 1513-1515. The Psalms were at that time understood primarily as the prayers of Christ.[49] Working from this point, Luther concentrated in his interpretation totally on the message of Christ. He made the central focus of his theology the themes of judgment, self-accusation, humbling oneself, and confessing oneself to be a sinner, as well as righteousness, justification, and grace.50 He also began to concentrate heavily on people's personal relationship to God, and on the relationship between judgment and gospel.[51]

In the Preface in 1545 Luther, then, looked back on a time before the beginning of his second lectures on the Psalms. The period previous to the Dictata is therefore quickly ruled out by Loewenich.[52] The discovery must have taken place thus during his first lectures on the Psalms, or as Erich Vogelsang suggested that it might occur during Luther's exposition of Psalm 72:1.[53] This view has gained widespread. Loewenich thought that in any event the actual turning point for the Reformation and Luther's religious struggle for a gracious God was already established before the beginning of Luther's lectures on Romans in April 1515,[54] and we may well agree with Loewenich that it took place within the period of the Dictata super Psalterium.[55] Skevington Wood is most appropriate at this juncture in that he said Luther had come very close to an evangelical appreciation for righteousness. He said, "He was on the edge of it, but not quite there."[56]

The years between 1513 and 1517 were the greatest period of Luther's life. He devoted almost exclusively in the study and teaching of Scriptures and to strengthen his theology. By 1517 when the indulgences were erupted into a public issue he was, therefore, in the words of Atkinson, "a massive man wearing a great weight of learning, with known unimpeachable life and of granite integrity, who could hold his peace before God and man no longer."[57]

CHAPTER TEN

Luther: The Gospel

TO BE SURE IN RECENT YEARS NOT ALL LUTHER SCHOLARS WOULD agree to an early date of Luther's rediscovery of the gospel, although Luther expressly identifies the righteousness of God as the content of his new discovery. Martin Brecht, for one, relying on Erwin Iserloh and others, decided for a late dating of Luther's reformation discovery, and he categorizes the theology of Luther prior to 1518 as a theology of humanity. Citing a letter of Luther in 1518, Brecht thought that as late as 1518 Luther once again identifies righteousness as self-accusation, that is in surrendering one's judgment, one becomes acceptable before God.[1] Brecht thought that from 1517 to 1518 in his early writings Luther still displayed ambivalent feelings toward the papacy and expressly apologized for many concessions to the pope.[2] Brecht also accepted a late date for the posting of the 95 Theses after October 31, 1517, perhaps in the middle of November, 1518.[3]

Such a position has in fact potentially placed Luther's rediscovery of the Gospel and the subsequent Reformation more of the result of Luther's desperate attempt to find an exit from the embarrassing confrontation brought about by his attack on the sales of indulgence.

As noted by Scott H. Hendrix that such ambivalent feelings towards papacy did not disappear completely until Luther arrived at Warthburg in 1521.[4] Hendrix observed that Luther's ambivalence and reservations about church authority had been present since his early days in the monastery (1505-1507).[5] By an examination of Luther's early writing, Hendrix concluded that Luther has in fact revealed a consistent and significant criterion for assessing the office of the papacy.[6] In Hendrix's finding, Luther's rediscovery cannot be divorced from his

view on church life: his theology also include a view of the Christian life and of the church that led directly the conflict with Rome.[7]

In 1961 the Roman Catholic Church historian Erwin Iserloh raised questions about the date of Luther's posting of his 95 Theses. Since then the late dating of the two events, Luther's Turmerlebnis and the Reformation, have generated intense debates; however, Bernhard Lohse noted that Iserloh's arguments are not really convincing, but just no one has yet succeeded in proving otherwise.[8] Lohse also took note that Iserloh's basic motive for his theology is to facilitate the reunification of the churches.[9] As far as the dating of the Reformation breakthrough is concern, Lohse registered, it consisted in the process by which Luther's theological work gradually gained its maturity, and his theological insight had been implicitly present from some point such as the beginning of the controversy on indulgences.[10]

The question about the content of the Reformation discovery is no less important than the question about the time at which it developed. Apparently Luther made his Reformation discovery about the righteousness of God and the justification of people in his early lectures. To be sure, Luther himself frequently said that his thought grew out of his exegetical effort cantered on the searching for the meaning of the righteousness of God. What then did justification mean for Luther?

As by his own testimony noted in the previous chapter, Luther moved his mind back and forth over the apparent impossibility in Romans 1:16. If the gospel reveals God's righteousness, how can it possibly be a power for our salvation, as well as declare the just shall live by faith? In his own words, mediating day and night, he discovered that the expression, "the righteousness of God," should not be understood actively as a subjective genitive, but rather passively as genitive auctoris (or objective genitive.)[11] Incidentally, Kaisemann thought that the grammatical distinction between an objective and a subjective genitive, between a genitive relation and a genitive of author only to some extent could be helpful to

the interpretation of Rom. 1:17.[12] In his finding, Kaisemann thought that for Paul the gospel is given to the Christian community as power and gift of God.[13] Thus, the righteousness of God is that which we are given (passively). Luther understood that according to Paul this righteousness is not the distributive righteousness or a standard by which God judges the believers but rather the righteousness by which God gives. Later Luther described this in 1545 as "passive righteousness." The righteousness of God understood passively corresponds to the mercy of God. It understands the act of making righteous or justification as the attribution of righteousness or what is known to theology as the imputed righteousness or forensic justification.

Luther's Reformation discovery was decisively oriented toward his personal dilemma. It was the decisive answer to the basic problem of his life: an existential crisis, the search for a gracious God. His theology was in this way more than an academic exercise: it was a confession of faith. For this reason Luther's exegetical effort became for him an entry into "paradise itself."[14]

Further appreciation of Luther's evangelical rediscovery of the gospel and the doctrine of justification by faith, one must keep in mind the prevailing mood and understanding of it in the sixteenth century. As noted in chapter seven, the "righteousness of God" (iustitia Dei) is understood to refer to an impersonal attribute of God (penal righteousness), which stands over and against us and judges us with complete impartiality on the basis of whether or not we have met the basic precondition for justification in the human side of the covenant. God is understood as completely fair in his dealings with humanity: whosoever meets the basic precondition of faith and humility has a right to request justification on the basis of the divine promise to justify anyone who fulfils the preconditions demanded by the law. It was thought unthinkable that God should give the sinner any special assistance in this matter--to do so would amount to favouritism. The same condition which was expressed in the law had to be met by every one, without any divine aid.

What happen if it is impossible to meet this precondition of the law through one's own effort? This was the starting point of Luther's problem. For Luther, the twin conditions of faith and humility made justification impossible: it was, as McGrath aptly described it, as if God promised a blind man a million dollars, provided that man could see at the first place.[15]

As Luther reflected on Romans 1:17, he became increasingly persuaded that an individual needed the assistance of the grace of God if justification was to be a real possibility. Luther's doctrine of justification is directly related to Paul's.[16] Together with Paul (Rom. 4:1ff) Luther ordinarily understands justification as God's act of crediting, imputing, or recognizing (imputare, reputare) as righteous, that is, as the act through which God grants a man value in relationship to him. It stood firmly connected with the person of the acting Christ so that he not only provides the basis of a future justification to be appropriated by an individual but he is objectively the real justification of the sinful world.[17] In the case of the gospel, it is the act by which God considers and receives as righteous the sinner who is unrighteous (ungodly) before him. This means, first, that justification consists in the fact that God does not impute sin but forgives it. Described positively, the forgiveness of sins or the non-imputation of sin is the imputation of righteousness. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the sinner. God sees the sinner as one with Christ. He forgives his sin and considers the sinner to be righteous for Christ's sake.[18] Thus the righteousness granted to the sinner is not his own produced by himself but an "alien" righteousness belonging to Jesus Christ. The judgment of justification is pronounced first of all fully and totally upon Christ who represents the new creation.[19]

For Luther, the fact that God declares the unrighteous to be righteous transcends all human understanding and reason. God's judgment contradicts the judgment of man, and each man's judgment of himself. A man condemned as sinner under the law both by himself and by other people is declared righteous.[20] God deals with men in this wonderful way. Reason simply cannot comprehend

the paradox of God's judgment and the hiddenness of the righteousness which he imputes. But it is also a constantly new temptation (anfechtung) for the believer, since even the godly people cannot easily believe that the sinner is justified, especially so when pointed to one whose life is not conforming to the prescribed standard of a given spiritual piety.[21] A man believes when he accepts God's gracious judgment over him. He takes the risk of living before God on no other basis than that righteousness of Christ which God's mercy imputes to him.[22]

Justification is received as the faith of Christ Jesus, that is, in a form of faith.[23] This faith is a gift of God. God justifies a man by giving him the faith of Jesus Christ.[24] Christ is the righteousness of men and to this extent this righteousness is outside of us. Justification is available in Christ objectively outside us. Christ is my righteousness only when God imputes him and make him my own. Faith is the only way in which Christ can give himself to me. We have faith in Christ.[25] Only the Christ who is appropriated through faith is my righteousness.[26] Man in God's judgment participates in Christ's righteousness. Man must accepts God's judgment on him in Christ Jesus for salvation. Thus in matter of justification, Christ and faith cannot be treated as two different things and set in opposition to each other.[27] Faith, understood in this way, is by all means not a cause of forgiveness and not a prior condition of justification which can possible be fulfilled by a human will in bondage.[28] Here is how faith is correlated with justification in Luther's mind.

Luther insists that justification involves a change in an individual's status before God, rather than a fundamental change in his nature: although the individual believer is righteous by faith, he remains a sinner. It is this insight that underlines Luther's famous assertion that the believer is "righteous and a sinner at one and the same time" (simul iustus et peccator). Luther could be easily misunderstood by his friends and opponents alike, even in modern time, by his use of the terms to justify (justificare) and justification (justificatio) because he used it in more than one sense.

Drawing closely from Luther's writings, Althaus concluded that from the beginning, justification most often means the judgment (verdict) of God with which he declares man to be righteous (justum reputare or computare).[29] In other places, however, this word stands for the entire event through which a man is essentially made righteous (a usage which Luther also finds in Paul, Romans 5),[30] that is, for both the imputation of righteousness to man as well as man's actually becoming righteous.[31] Justification in this sense remains incomplete on earth and is first completed on the Last Day. Complete righteousness in this sense is an eschatological reality. This twofold use of the word cannot be correlated with Luther's early and later theology; he uses justification in both sense at the same time, sometimes even shortly after each other in the same text.[32] Essentially for Luther made righteous is to be judged righteous.[33]

The last hundred years or so researched into Pauline theology has raised again questions about the nature of justification by faith chiefly in the areas on how central is justification in Pauline thought (evangelical criterion); is justification a present experience, or does it belong, more to the future, as an anticipated verdict of the last judgment, and are the terms for "to justify" and "justified" primarily declaratory or behavioural (essential or to make righteous, or sometime is also known as ethical righteousness.)

J. A. Ziesler in his study which is largely linguistic, argues, that both aspects can be found in the Hebrew form sadaq, although in the Hebrew the forensic is probably primarily.[34] In the same breath, Ziesler also writes, "If God looks on believers only as they are found in Christ, he may properly declare them righteous, for in him they are righteous. There is nothing fictional here."[35] In concord to this theological point that lies behind many of the approaches which defend the forensic view, J. Weiss writes that justification "does not say what a man is in himself, but it states what he is considered to be in the eyes of God."[36] H. Ridderbos asserts, "It is a matter of man as a sinner, and not yet of his future inner renewal."[37] In the words of Nigel Turner,"It is not fair to describe the view of "forensic" as a

mere act of declaration, as a fiction; rather it is the extending of a waiting Father's arms. He writes, "When God justifies the sinner He absolves and acquits him of all the past, and the erstwhile sinner is not merely "regarded as if" he were righteous, He is actually righteous, for God regards him so."[38]

Anthony C. Thiselton in his fresh approach to the problems related to justification by faith concluded that within the context of eschatology or at least in the context of the new age, the believer is "seen as" righteous. Yet in the context, or frame of reference, of history and law, he remains a sinner.[39] He writes, "If justification is a verdict, for God to declare the believer righteous in the context of eschatology does not contradict his declaring him a sinner in the context of history, or in terms of what he is in the natural world. In the context of the new age, the eschatological verdict of "righteous" which belongs to the last judgment is brought forward and appropriated by faith. In this sense, justification, although strictly future, is operative in the present "apart from the law."[40]

Thiselton further states that in as far as the believer is accorded his eschatological status, viewed in that context he is justified. In as far as he still lives in the everyday world, he remains a sinner who awaits future justification. History and eschatology each provide a frame of reference in which a different verdict on the believer is valid and appropriate.[41] This is neither contradiction nor even "paradox." Since the frame of reference of eschatology, rather than of history, is the decisive one, the eschatological verdict can be anticipated even in the present by faith.

In answer to the question: how is "faith" capable of doing this? Thiselton concluded in the same study about Pauline theology that in the same context it means the acceptance of the future--oriented outlook as being effectively relevant in the present. The verdict that will be openly valid at the judgment day is valid for faith now.[42]

He writes, "From a purely external or historical viewpoint, justification remains future; but faith involves stepping out of a purely historical frame of reference into

that of eschatology. Thus Paul may not be as far as is sometimes assume from the definition of faith in Hebrews.....If this is correct, however, it shows that faith is not merely an external instrument which somehow "procures" justification; it is an indispensable feature of justification itself. To have this faith is part of what justification is and entails. It is part of the experience of it.[43]

Such a distinction must be made in order to eliminate questions such as if God were to declare a person righteous who is in fact unrighteous, God would be a liar, trading on a legal fiction. God does not only declare a person righteous he literally makes a person righteous. As Nigel Turner puts it, "In Christian experience the imputed righteousness becomes real righteousness."[44]

To understand this, we need to consider the doctrines of justification associated with Zwingli and Martin Bucer who rose to prominence before John Calvin in Switzerland. Alister McGrath in his inquiry brought to attention that it is often overlooked that early Reformed theology was strongly moralistic. Zwingli's chief concern was with reforming the moral, structures, and practices of the church of his day and bringing them in line with the Scriptures. Zwingli argued that Christian morality consists in following the example of Jesus Christ, and that justification took place as a result of this imitation of Christ: the moral regeneration of the individual was thus the cause of his justification.[45]

In effect, said McGrath in the same place, Zwingli's teaching was simply works-righteousness: individuals were justified on the basis of their works in this case "moral regeneration," which was obviously a human achievement. So much so that the early Reformed theologians viewed Luther's teaching on justification with alarm, as it seemed to them to break the link between morality and religion, a fear, thought McGrath, which had no basis at all.[46]

The concept of the "imputation of the righteousness of Christ" needs further discussion that is quite beyond the intention of this paper; nonetheless, Luther had insisted that the sinner is justified without any reference to his works, regeneration, or moral character, whereby putting justification before faith (receiving faith) and

even regeneration, a position not permitted by the Reformed *ordo salutis*. For the later Reformers, such as Melanchthon and Calvin, the basis of our justification is the righteousness of Christ, earned through his obedience to God in his life and death. This righteousness is always alien and external to us: we do not possess in ourselves sufficient righteousness upon which the verdict of divine justification may be based. The righteousness of Christ is thus "imputed" to us: it is treated as if it were our, or reckoned to us, without ever becoming ours. Strictly speaking it would even be misleading to say that If I believe in Christ, God will be gracious to me, provided I believe and feel sufficiently miserable about my sin and guilt.

It is important to grasp the objective validity of the forgiveness of sins offered on the part of God prior to the human act of faith, and therefore also prior to repentance, in order not to fall into the later errors of both seventeenth--century orthodoxy and eighteenth--century pietistic dogmatic and the intellectualism of the Enlightenment.[47] Only if justification is understood to follow, or to be based on, transformation or regeneration do we need to worry at the suggestion that the believer lives in a sort of Walter Mitty world in which he is treated as righteous when he is actually nothing of the sort.[48] According to McGrath, in fact, the view that justification is based on and contingent on moral regeneration is associated with the Enlightenment and represents an abandonment of the idea of justification by grace in favour of justification by merit.[49] Justification as a divine act propter Christum is an actual prius of all inward changes for the better in human beings.[50] The inward reconciliation of the heart of God with sinners occurs not because of the connection we initiate with Christ, but because of the connection Christ established with us. The free and full forgiveness of sins is proclaimed as an objective gift of God, on account of Christ, to sinners, not because they repent and believe but in order that they may believe and repent.[51] The central feature of the Christian proclamation is that God offers us salvation as a gift through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Moral or religious renewal is not a precondition of forgiveness: forgiveness is offered to us unconditionally, as gift of God. We

come to God empty-handed, having nothing to offer except that which we receive by the grace of God. Forgiveness leads to renewal and regeneration. To invert this order, and to suggest that forgiveness is conditional, depending upon renewal and regeneration, McGrath insists, is to abandon a crucial insight of the gospel and to degenerate into some form of moralism, such as that associated with the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century.[52]

Luther's rediscovery of the gospel of justification by faith alone has created offense within Christianity. The most insidious kind of temptation (Anfechtung) to the religious person is the arrogant belief that God will love me more if I become more religious, pious, or that God's blessing are measured in proportion to my God-pleasing attitude, moral conduct or praxis. The truth is that God does not require a particular variety of religious experience.[53] God does not prefer one especially enthusiastic kind of response to the offer of grace and forgiveness.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Reformation

LUTHER AS A REFORMER HAS BEEN WELL DOCUMENTED BY historians, yet where lied his strength or resources? When giving reasons to the rise of the European Reformation, Dr. Mike Juva[1] observed that the rise of nationalism broke down the centre power of the Pope and the political unity of Christendom.[2] European Christianity had been divided into several national states; the abandoning of the barter-economy and the institution of monetary economy gave birth to the early form of capitalism; the rise of proletariat and capitalists intensified the instability of society which moved the centres of economic power from the nobility to the burghers. The minds of men were deeply affected by these changes which generated social revolutions. Juva noted that by the eve of the Reformation, the church was being by-passed by these historical and social changes for reason that the church's failure and "inability to give effective answers to the spiritual problems put to her by the changes in society and in human thinking."[3]

Juva identified three of these problems which found similar expressing in modern era that confront the Christian life in medieval piety, i.e., the problem of true Christian community, the relation of the Christian to this world, and the problem of human guilt. Christian life in modern era is equally paralyzed by these problems with an intensity not less than that in the Medieval period.

In Juva's finding, on the eve of Reformation, the great schism and the Conciliar movement might have done a great blow to the power of the Pope, but the position of the clergy and the church hierarchy were largely remain untouched. The church was, according to the prevailing Augustinian world view, the Kingdom of God was identified with the institutionalized church which is

irreconcilable with this world. The laymen were quite left out in the affairs of the church and, in Juva's own word, "Their only role was to be an object of the Church's education and care. The church was, in practice, no longer essentially the communion of the believers, but a hierarchical institution."[4]

Juva is not alone in his finding that too much power was being pushed into the hands of the clergy, and it is equally rampant in modern Protestant churches. The Church was torn by the evil of power and authority of church politics. The clergy pride themselves by the nature of religion and divine calling to assume themselves the roles of servants of God or mediators between the Divine with unique access to the Almighty which constitutes the source of the absoluteness of the power of the clergy that they are at liberty to dictate the theology, belief, behaviour and personal conduct of the devout adherents.

The clergy and priests were given the impression that their training in seminary was most superior. Little did they realize that in actual fact they were often introduced to information and knowledge via second hand materials, pamphlets and handouts. An anti-intellectualism was subtly transmitted in the classrooms. Honest criticism was totally forbidden. Blind obedience was carefully cultivated and promoted. Intelligent students were put to spiritual suspicion if not brutally oppressed. The newly ordained clergy developed insecurity and uncertainty about his personal significance and position soon after ordination when he realized that his narrow religious idealism acquired in his theological education was not at all shared by his congregation of lay people who faced the hard and oppressed challenges of reality of daily life in a fast changing world that those narrow views were not effective nor sufficient to enable them to overcome these fast changing challenges. Should the clergy gathered enough moral courage and intellectual curiosity to read outside the assigned texts to discover what religious truths that he was denied nor taught, disillusion slipped in to cause some resentment or hid himself behind church authority to seek for Pocket of Power for personal security.

Juva suggests that the Wycliffian movement in England and the Hussies movement in Bohemian were two typical examples of revolts that demanded "the participation of laymen in the life, work, and responsibility of the church."[5]

He lamented that the church chose to ignore them. This resulted into the laymen resent the suffering imposed by a narrow cleric view and understanding of life and the arbitrary use of authority by the clergy, pastors and bishops. The congregations were embarrassed by the neglect of human right and dignity within the church. Most of all they resent being treated like children, being excluded from decision making, and having to suffer silently Sunday after Sunday without any means to redress the insults and injuries pushed off on them as sermons and homily especially so when the offering records were taking a downward turn.

The Reformation in one aspect was one of a continuous protests against the use and abuses of cleric power and church authority. William of Occam had already writing and warning the disastrous effect of a non-scriptural use of authority in the church. Religion and politics are the two major factors that determine and influence the stability of society and progress of human civilization. They both have in common the power of influence and control of its effect over human destiny and history. They both enjoy an absolutist character. Power is, however, corrupts. Church history time and again had challenged the abusive manner to exercise and organize the absolute power of authority and, again we witness the extensive crisis of its abuse in modern churches: Protestants and Catholic alike. Authority as power emerge naturally within the church as the church takes an institutional turn into bureaucratic organization which found no much differences between Congregationalist or Presbyterian or Catholic. A deep sense of divine calling and self-righteousness of the clergy with the modes of operation of authority generates temptation to use uncompassionate, immoral and unjust means in the pursuit even of good objectives in the name of extending the Kingdom of God and the mission of the church. Self deception, was said, is a

professional hazard of those holding position of power and, everyone so believed that he is exempted from this self deception.

Absolute power of the king was effectively checked by political changes in various democratic movements in history; the clergy's remain unmolested. The forerunners of the Reformation were mostly reactionary; the movement of the Brothers of the Common life was withdrawal. Luther proposed and advocated the doctrine of priesthood of all believers. He opened the Holy Scriptures to all laymen.

With the rise of capitalism and economic prosperity, coupled with personal achievement, there was the open enjoyment of life in the Renaissance, just like our modern days. Juva has observed that "asceticism was inseparably attached to medieval piety to such a degree that the denial of the goods of this world was commonly considered to be one of the highest virtues, a value in itself."[6] For the Renaissance, as Juva puts it, this world was not evil but essentially good and all of its pleasures should be enjoyed. The dualism of Augustinian world view was greatly polarized to the extend that accepting the one could not accept the other. The church was unable to find a positive answer to this polarization. Citing Juva, "there was on the part of the Christian tradition an equally uncompromising preaching of repentance and a general and widespread positive response to it. The very same people who were powerfully attracted by the splendour and wealth of the world, were in the next moment ready to dress themselves in sackcloth and ashes when the revivalist preacher pictured before their spiritual eyes the horrors of Hell and joys of Heaven.....True faith was always considered to mean the rejection of the World, flight from the World and separation from the World."[7] The demand of economic progress and competing interest in enterprise press hard inevitably the constant engagement with the world, an engagement was thought wrong in the Augustinian world view and religious piety. Guilt thus was accumulated.

Men were burdened by constant feelings of guilt, shame, and failure. This, thought Juva, was the third problem that confronts the Christian. Describing the situation or *Sibtz-im-Leben* of the spiritual life and piety of the Medieval period similar to that by McGrath and Siggins earlier on in this paper, citing Juva at length, "the church taught, it is true, that God forgives the sins of men for Christ's sake, but in practice this forgiveness could not be earned except through a genuine repentance, specific religious exercises and the works of satisfaction ordered by the Church. Salvation was by grace, but grace was to be achieved through good works. God was understood primarily as a righteous and severe judge, who demanded from man real sanctity and unconditional fulfilment of His commands. Every sin demanded satisfaction, and it was hopeless to meet God without it. Of course, the idea that justification could be bought by good works was by no means the recognized doctrine of the Church; but, on the other hand, very little was done to refute this widespread distortion of the Gospel. On the contrary, the whole attitude of the Church pointed towards such a distortion. Whatever the theological grounds for the sale of indulgences, it gave the ordinary people the impression that salvation could be bought for money. The praise of the higher morality of the religious orders, the monks and the nuns, and the multitude of spiritual exercises recommended by the Church, also gave the impression that the essence of Christianity was in the achievement of a high spiritual morality. Even where the Christian faith was taken more seriously than elsewhere, among the devout, Christ was not primarily considered as the Redeemer, but as the Ideal, who placed moral demands upon the sinner and fulfilled them in him and for him. To a very large degree the Gospel had become a certain type of moralism[8]

Juva concluded that the essence of Christian faith was turned to understand it as the fulfilment of God's demands and not the forgiveness of sins, as a result the question of human guilt remained unanswered. He took note that this was further intensified by the new theology of Occam which emphasized the ability of man to do good, if he only really wanted to. The psychological impact out of these

teaching and distortion of the gospel made the anxiety of a conscientious Christian very sick and helpless.

The Reformation initiated by Luther was the answer to these fundamental problems. Luther's solution, though for his personal dilemma at first, was simple in statement but profound in application that its universal magnitude was so immense that other reformers after him were unable to manage its magnitude without eventually dividing up the whole Reformation.

What Luther discovered from the Holy Scriptures as we noted in the previous relevant chapters that the grace of God simply means the forgiveness of all sins. For Luther, the grace of God was quite enough in itself. For God's justice far transcends man's idea of it: God's forgiveness cleanses humanity, in it God asks only the sinner should turn to Him and accept His forgiveness, i. e. to believe and ask forgiveness for the sake of Jesus Christ. With this understanding, Luther tied the grace of God and faith together. Soon justification by faith became the basic doctrine of the Reformation and solution to the three religious problems.

For Luther, the true Christian community, therefore, was the product of the spoken word of God. With this the congregation is understood as the assembly of saints in which "the Gospel is always rightly preached and the Sacraments rightly administered," a normative statement which later was enshrined in the Protestant Confession. For Luther, where the Gospel is preached, there is the true church and communion of saints and everything else is unessential and the community does not prescribe any minimum requirements, but the only means to sustain the church are the Word and the Sacraments, not any external discipline of piety.

To this unprescribed external discipline of pious exercises, the radical wings of the Reformation: the Zwinglians, the Anabaptists and the Spiritualists later directed their most severe criticism.

They claimed the church only consists the true and visible believers and therefore they purged of godless and nominal Christians, that they separated their

congregations of the "elect" from every possible connection with the state and even the World. Later much of these ideal found expression by Calvin.

When Luther liberated the medieval men from the burden to have to please God by their work-piety and spiritual achievements, he virtually also set men free from the bondage of guilt and unnatural men, the old division of life unto two spheres: the pious and profane, the worldly and sacred, that he restored men the true freedom to serve his neighbours in unselfish way. As Juva described it, Luther restored to its spiritual value everyday vocation of ordinary men and women, that "service is to be rendered in the every calling in which each person was put, be it that of a ruler, husband or wife, servant, preacher of just anybody. In every vocation there is the cross. In our everyday calling the old man in us must daily be crucified."[9]

Not all approve just how justification by faith was to be used in the daily life of the believer. The Church of Rome did not accept it, but abandoned Occamism and returned to Thomism. The radical wings of the Reformation found it obnoxious and repulsive the teaching of justification by faith without work because they wrongly thought that Luther had divided up religion and morality, little did they realize that for Luther the greater value in moral life of the believer is completely and uninhibited trust in God through Christ Jesus.[10] In the words of Karl Holl, like Jesus, Luther tried to show his contemporaries that their apparently intense piety, the piety of good works, devotions, and mortification, even repentance was actually only an evasion of the more difficult task which actually required by God in justification by faith.

Another potential reason the Ministerium and body of clergymen both in Catholic and later in Protestants alike found it repugnant to accept in full the teaching of justification by faith together with its twin the just shall live by faith was due to the long established method of recruitment of cleric personnel. Most if not all entered the priesthood or the monastery, like Luther's case, or the ministry in the case of later Protestant clergymen, with a deep sense for spiritual

achievement at the personal level, though claim is always made on divine calling, that they have proven genuine faith, true repentance, good personal conduct and so on. With this at the background of recruitment small wonder the teaching of justification by faith without work and the just shall live by faith found a strange, repulsive and foreign ground even among the ordained for the Words of God. For them the fact that they were accepted into the body of clergymen was more of their good spiritual conduct and devotion. With such spiritual pride and lack of the culture of honest self-criticism of their professional motives and the sub-current of deeply rooted personal insecurity, the unconscientious clergymen have conspiratorially made themselves and the holy office an obstruction and stumbling stone to the Gospel namely in Christ Jesus is the righteousness of God and the forgiveness of sins without good work and they retort to a piety of works.

In his conclusion, Juva observed that the great European Reformation teaches us, however, no movement in history, not even in Church history, is without its adverse effects and distortions.

C H A P T E R T W E L V E

Conclusion

ANYONE WHO HAS HAD ENGAGED IN THE STUDY OF LUTHER soon realized what an awesome and tedious task that one would get quickly frustrated. In deed one cannot completely satisfied with one's study and research of Luther because Luther is such a theological giant that reading him involves patience and much efforts; however, as so many have experienced it the reward is exceedingly great for personal benefit and spiritual enlightenment. One cannot remain long without being changed in the process.

This paper started off as an investigation, in the face of various claims on Luther in the current debates, into the development of Luther's hermeneutical thinking, i.e. the way and method of how he was able to study the Holy Scriptures and obtained the greatest benefit and a norm of piety not only for himself and also for the whole of Christianity since St. Paul's day. God has a wonderful plain of salvation for humankind: but no one knows it better that St. Paul; and no one understands St. Paul better than Luther. Investigation into Luther cannot but to take an biographical approach in that every aspect of Luther's thinking: theological, social political, hermeneutical or the like could not be independently disassociated from the long years of his personal struggle for a gracious God. Investigation of him cannot, therefore, be compartmentalized without doing injustice to Luther. This perhaps is the most difficult area anyone would face

while doing Luther. This paper took a free discussion of some aspects of Luther's life and was able to identify some broad elements and major themes in Luther's thinking: theological or otherwise.

Luther did not begin his exegetical exercises with a preconceived notion with a set of ideal rulings to which his interpretation of the Holy Scriptures was to conform, rather he literally walked into something he did not expect nor well prepare for. Unlike other reformers before or during his time who were influenced either by Neo-Platonism via St. Augustine, or Aristotelian philosophical ideal via humanism of the Renaissance, or Mysticism via the Spiritualists, Luther emerged straight out fresh from the Holy Scriptures as an appeal from his existentialistic crisis. In this way Luther's hermeneutics was without influence of a philosophical nor spiritual idealism, but practical and pragmatic which involved a strong element of risk in that he did not foresee the outcome of his exegesis nor the impact subsequently it might have. His hermeneutics was an open-end effort completely led by the Holy Spirit, for no one knows better how the Scriptures should be understood or interpreted other than the author Himself, the Almighty God.

By the time Luther died, he was already well known as a fervent teacher of justification by faith, and even today, in good honour, that statement is so closely associated with his name. He spent the rest of his life time, just like before the outbreak of the Reformation, apart from those demanding issues involved with it, to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures and justification by faith. For Luther, Christ is the ground and reality of justification, and the believer was incorporated into the creative power of Christ's life.

A point of subtle distinction must be made of Luther's christocentrically approach to the Holy Scriptures against the reductionist approach of the radical wings of the Reformation and the Humanist, such as Erasmus, though they also made claims of Christ is the centre of the Holy Scriptures in that, as Althaus described it aptly, "they understand Christ as a teacher of virtue or as an ethical prophet and lawgiver. For Luther `Christ' means the gospel of that free mercy of

God in Christ on which alone man's salvation depends."[1] With this fine distinction also laid the foundation of hermeneutical differences that later on divided Protestantism.

Further describing Luther's hermeneutical principle as christocentric, Althaus said, "One can formulate Luther's principle thus: Scripture is always to be interpreted according to the analogy of Scripture. And this is nothing else than the analogy of the Gospel. Christocentric interpretation for Luther thus means gospel-centered interpretation, understood in terms of the gospel of justification by faith alone."[2] In this way Luther allows the gospel to step out of the Scriptures to later re-enter it as an approach to interpret it with the use of justification by faith. Therefore, for Luther justification by faith also has a key position in exegesis for it is not a static doctrinal statement in Luther's conception of the Gospel and the Holy Scriptures. For Luther the Gospel is the forgiveness of sin in Christ Jesus when expressed in judicial language is justification by faith alone. The forgiveness of sin, the promise by the Gospel, holds the norm in the Holy Scriptures. Only from this centre could the Old and New Testaments be correctly understood even with the ethical imperatives of Scriptures which appear contrary to the gospel's "through faith alone," for Luther, these imperatives first received their meaning from Christ, thus they are not to be interpreted as law but as gospel.[3] For we found Luther said that all of Scripture everywhere deals only with Christ.[4]

Luther made a clear and conscious distinction between the gospel and the law is all well known. For Luther, Christ is also the interpreter of the law, and the law is contained under the gospel.

The Gospel of Christ Jesus as the promise is the bestowal of the forgiveness of sins. The Gospel is not only the message that God forgave sins in the past and will do so again in the future, but it is the Word by which God today forgives the sinner all his sins. This occurs through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Luther tied closely the Gospel and preaching, thought that preaching was not a preacher's ideas nor searching around in one's

personal religious insights for some kind of contemporary message that one thinks people needs; rather, as Fred W. Meuser termed it, Christian preaching when it is faithful to the word of God in the Scriptures about our need and God's response to it, is God speaking.[5] In preaching, Christ alone is preached. For Luther said of Christ, "for us he put himself under the law, to free us from the power of sin, so we may live in obedience to the gospel. Christ alone is the fulfiller of the law. All of your comfort, life, righteousness and joy are in Christ.....Believe that firmly. Then at once good works will follow--thanksgiving and praise of God and service of the neighbour with all one's property and good....."[6]

A study of Luther's use of the Holy Scriptures is to retrace the steps how he actually used the Scriptures in exegesis: an exegesis seeks to discover the Gospel. Such an exegetical analysis does not seek to determine what is to be believed; but what is already believed which determined by the Scriptures itself. Luther did not sought to imposed upon the Scriptures his personal exegetical ideas nor does it consist in its verbatim repeatation what is already written in the Scriptures. He let himself be guided by the Holy Spirit anew from the power of forgiveness of sins as he experienced it in his Anfechtungen.

Skevington Wood retraced the order of Luther's lectures:[7]

1512-1513	Genesis (?)
1513-1515	Psalms
1515-1516	Romans
1515-1516	Galatians
1517-1518	Hebrews
1518-1521	Psalms, Galatians, Titus, Judges (?)
1523-1525	Deuteronomy
1524-1526	Minor Prophets
1526	Ecclesiastes
1527	I John; Titus; Philemon

1528	I Timothy
1527-1530	Isaiah
1530-1531	Song of Solomon
1531-1535	Galatians
1532-1533	Psalms
1535-1545	Genesis

Luther married Katharine von Bora in 1525. Their marriage produced three sons--Johannes, Martin and Paul.8 Luther died on February 18, 1546 in Eisleben, beginning of the Smalcaldic War. With an escort of 50 horsemen, the remain was brought back to Wittenburg. He was included among the prophets especially for the German people. He once said of his people, "It is not my purpose to foretell the future for Germany from the stars. but to proclaim the wrath of God from theology; for it is impossible that Germany will continue without great hardship, for daily God is being provoked to destroy us."[9] Most of all, however, Protestantism owed him a great debt.

It is still remains true that the main question is not that we do not have a Luther, rather how to describe him fairly and justly as noted by Lohse earlier on. The question is no longer whether Luther and his Reformation is still relevant to us or how do we pose question as to the significance of the Reformation in our days, rather do we hear him correctly and honestly? Have we listened to his advice? The question of contemporary significance of Luther and the Reformation must take into consideration of describing Luther fairly and honestly before attempt is made to answer more other questions however urgent it may appeared to be. We must not allow ourselves to fall into the trap of having a distorted Luther or the Gospel he rediscovered whereby we are impotent to response to the changing world, but to sit back and lament to say, "This is all the best we have done; submit the rest to God." while we are so oblivious about our deception of self complacency. Each generation of believers must personally or corporately

involve in a kind of *Anfechtung* not unlike of that of Luther in order to appropriate the Gospel which is given in Jesus the Christ.

May the righteousness of God which is in Christ Jesus continue to shine forth to the believers of this generation as He has done during Luther's Reformation. Amen.

Abbreviations

References to Luther's writings are cited from the Weimar edition and the American edition of his works by volume, page, line, and or number:

WA	D. Martin Luthers, Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Weima, 1883-
WA, Br	D. Martin Luthers Werke. Briefwechsed. Weimar, 1930-
WA, DB	D. Martin Luthers Werke. Deutsche Bibel. Weimar 1906-1961.
WA, Tr	D. Martin Luthers Werke. Tischreden. Weimar, 1923- 1921.
AE	Luther's Works. American Edition. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lebmann. St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordian Publishing House and Fortress Press.
CR	Corpus Reformatiorum, ed. by C G Bretschneider and H. E. Bindell, Halle, 1834-1860.

N O T E S

CHAPTER ONE
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11. Dunnett, The Interpretation of Holy Scripture, p82.

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3. Kittelson, p83.
4. WA 30:III, 386,30; AE 34:103.
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28. Braaten, Justification, p26.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN
The Reformation

1. The Very Right Reverend Doctor Mikko Yuva is Archbishop Emeritus of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. He holds doctoral degrees both in Philosophy and Theology. During his distinguished career he served as Professor of Finnish History in the university of Turku, Professor of Finnish and Scandinavian Church History in the University of Helsinki, Rector and then Chancellor of the University of Helsinki, President of the Lutheran World Federation (1970-1977) and, from 1978 to 1983, Archbishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

2. "European Reformation in its Historical Setting", A weekly lecture delivered at the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Hong Kong, October 21, 1988. Reprinted in no. 11, 1988, pp35-45 of the Theology and Life, a journal published by the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Hong kong.

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9. Ibid., p45.
10. cf. Luther's Trestise on Good Works.

CHAPTER TWELVE
Conclusion

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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p80.
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8. Interestingly the LWF Information, No.11, November 1990 carried a report from the Swiss weekly newspaper "Die Weltwoch" which investigated into Luther's descendants. According to the report there are about 3,000 direct descendants of Martin and his brother Jacob Luther. Among them, 196 in the United States, 176 in Eastern Germany, 17 in Western Germany, six Italian Luthers and six Finnish families with the name of Luther. Most live as doctors, farmers, craftsmen and scientists. There are some black sheep too.
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